



**Nottingham  
Law School**  
Nottingham Trent University

**Nottingham Law School Legal Advice Centre**

# **Annual Report 2020**



**Nottingham Law School  
Legal Advice Centre**

03

Background

04

2019/20 report by Head of Centre

05

Acknowledgements

05

Funding and governance

06

The Centre’s services and projects

18

Data summary

24

2019/20 highlights

28

Client and student feedback

30

Profiles of former student volunteers

32

The Centre’s staff



Nottingham Law School (NLS), Nottingham Trent University, is one of the leading providers of academic and professional legal education with an outstanding reputation in the delivery of innovative courses. We are one of the largest law schools in the UK, with over 100 staff and in excess of 3,000 students.

As part of NLS’s commitment to the delivery of transformational legal education and its commitment to supporting access to justice, NLS set up a fully regulated law firm - the Nottingham Law School Legal Advice Centre Ltd (‘the Centre’) in 2015 as a major milestone in the development of the NLS’s pro bono advice clinic first established in 2002.

The Centre, an exempt charity, is a wholly owned subsidiary of Nottingham Trent University and holds an Alternative Business Structure (ABS) licence from the Solicitors Regulation Authority. The model has parallels to the teaching hospital model seen traditionally in the medical sector, and provides the opportunity for our students to obtain valuable work experience and develop their practical skills alongside their studies. The firm was the first of its kind when it became regulated in 2015 and such a model remains rare in both the UK, and the international, higher education sector.

Legal advice, assistance and representation is provided on a not-for-profit basis to individuals that cannot access legal aid or afford legal representation across a large range of service areas, providing a vital service to the community.

The Centre is based within Chaucer Building, City Centre campus, providing a confidential space for clients, staff and students and enabling us to provide a professional service, both in person and online. The current facilities were officially opened in 2014 by Dominic Grieve QC, MP (then Attorney General).

**The Centre is multi award winning and was crowned ABS of the Year 2020 at the Modern Law Awards for its innovation and community involvement.**



# Report by Head of the Legal Advice Centre

Welcome to our Annual Report 2019/20. It is fair to say that this year was one of two halves. October 2019 now feels a long time ago, particularly as the world has changed so much since then. Inevitably, this report will be dominated by Covid and how that has impacted our service, but we want to recognise the progress and achievements in the months before Covid as well as the developments we have managed to achieve despite the pandemic.

Between October 2019 and March 2020, we were fortunate enough to receive visits from Campbell University (North Carolina, USA) the CEO of the Financial Ombudsman, Caroline Wayman, and our very own Vice Chancellor, Professor Edward Peck CBE. It was an honour for staff and students to talk in more detail about the work we do in the Centre with such distinguished guests.

In February 2020 we celebrated at the Modern Law Awards 2020 after winning ABS of the Year and our Callum Scott being named Paralegal of the Year, it seems surreal looking back at the photographs from that event knowing that only a month later we would be thrown into a completely different reality. Covid has brought immense challenges but has also accelerated progress and development.

I want to extend a huge thank you to my colleagues and our students for their flexibility, resilience, compassion and professionalism in the face of the challenging circumstances imposed upon us this year. I also want to thank the University for their continued unwavering support. In particular, I would like to thank the **Board of Governors**, the **Vice Chancellor**, **Professor Edward Peck CBE**, the **University Executive Team** and the Centre's **Board of Directors**, **ABS Management Board** and **Jenny Chapman, Executive Dean** of NLS.

With the pandemic having a disproportionate effect on the vulnerable, we recognise that the numbers of people unable to access justice will continue to grow. Backlogs in court and tribunal cases, already at unacceptable levels pre-Covid, continue to spiral further out of control and those that are unable to engage with, or access, technology are becoming harder to reach. The reaction to online hearings has also been mixed, with some welcoming the chance to engage in less intimidating surroundings, with others feeling confused and disconnected, or unable to take part at all. Covid has reinforced the importance of community and, despite the challenges, it is a time to remain

positive, look to the future and celebrate achievements as we continue to weather the pandemic together.

Throughout the pandemic we have remained in touch with our partner organisations, particularly, the Free Representation Unit, Support Through Court, LawWorks, advice agencies and the community centres where we provide outreach advice services. It has been a great source of support to be able to share best practice and work collaboratively to ensure all our services can continue. As the longer-term detrimental impact of Covid starts to become apparent, the need for our services, and those of our partner organisations and other not-for-profits, become even more vital.

In this Annual Report we highlight the life changing work of the Centre and reflect on the impact Covid has had on our work, our students and our clients, and how we have adapted as a result.



**Laura Pinkney**  
Head of NLS Legal Advice Centre

## Acknowledgments

Nottingham Law School Legal Advice Centre would not exist without the innovative vision and the generous financial assistance provided by Nottingham Trent University. In particular, we would like to thank the University's **Board of Governors**, the **Vice Chancellor Professor Edward Peck CBE** and the **University Executive Team** for their commitment and support to the Centre.

We would also like to express our deepest appreciation to: **Richard Bagley**, **Paul and Lynne Bowden**; and **Martin and Linda Hunter** for sharing and championing our vision, supporting us in various ways over many years, and whose very generous financial donations have enabled the Centre to provide new student opportunities and expand our vital services to the community. We are truly grateful.

Sincere thanks to **Santander Universities UK** who have provided vital funding to establish and expand our Special Educational Needs and Disability Service.

In addition, our achievements would not be possible without the numerous firms, organisations and charities that work with us and provide support for the work we do. Our sincere thanks to:

**Citizen's Advice Nottingham and District**

**Citizen's Advice Broxtowe**

**Derbyshire Law Centre**

**Environmental Law Foundation**

**Free Representation Unit**

**Improving Lives**

**Jonathan's Voice**

**LawWorks**

**NBV Enterprise Solutions Ltd**

**Nottingham City Council – Welfare Rights Service**

**Nottingham County Council – Benefits Team and i-work**

**Nottingham Law Centre**

**Nottingham Women's Centre**

**Potter Clarkson**

**St George's Community Centre, Netherfield**

**Support Through Court**

We also want to say a huge thank you to the students that work with us. We value your hard work and dedication.

## Funding and governance

The current staff budget for the Centre is supported by the University and NLS and forms part of NLS's overall staffing budget. The Centre also receives funding from private donors and business organisations. We are immensely grateful to the generous financial support of a number of individuals and organisations which have supported further expansion of some of our service areas.

Nottingham Law School Legal Advice Centre Limited is a company limited by guarantee with its sole member being Nottingham Trent University. The University covers the costs of all the property, assets, staffing and other services required by the Centre.

The ABS Management Board and Board of Directors for Nottingham Law School Legal Advice Centre Limited are:

**Professor Cillian Ryan**  
Pro Vice-Chancellor

**James Lacey**  
NTU Director of Finance

**Rebecca Jenkyn**  
NTU Head of Governance and Legal Services

**Joanne Cenic**  
Finance Business Partner and the Centre's Compliance Officer for Finance and Administration

**Jenny Chapman**  
NLS Executive Dean and the Centre's Compliance Officer for Legal Practice and Money Laundering Reporting Officer

**Laura Pinkney**  
Head of NLS Legal Advice Centre



# The Centre's services



When lockdown was first imposed in March 2020, our main priority was to continue to operate the service on a fully remote basis. Pre-lockdown, our student volunteers were only permitted to undertake client work when physically present in the Centre, so the biggest challenge for us was enabling students to continue volunteering online. We also needed to ensure we could continue to effectively represent and communicate with our clients. We therefore had to implement robust new processes, policies and procedures, particularly around ensuring client confidentiality, within an extremely short timescale.

Many have welcomed the flexible approach, and the number of missed appointments (clients and students), has been reduced. In addition, moving to remote service delivery has opened up work experience opportunities to a more diverse range of students, including distance learners.

## Our service areas:

### Business and Enterprise Law Service (BELS)

The BELS service provides advice and assistance to individuals, charities, social enterprises, start-ups and SMEs on a wide range of commercial and contractual issues. This includes advice on company structure and governance, risk audits, corporate distress and County Court litigation.

2019/20 saw some key service development on BELS. In particular, we launched our collaboration with Loughborough University's Enterprise Hub. We now provide an outreach advice service to students and graduates of Loughborough University who are launching businesses. This allows us to positively contribute to local growth and enterprise in an often overlooked area of unmet legal need. During the first year of the project, we assisted 12 new businesses. We also continued to expand County Court litigation service, and accepted instructions on more complex matters of a value which is too high for the small claims track.

The pandemic has led to a shift in focus in the nature of enquiries we are receiving. In the first half of the year we saw start up and intellectual property queries, whilst post-Covid, enquiries were more focused on cash-flow, debt recovery and insolvency. We are also seeing more work representing home-owners who are dissatisfied with residential building work, where the pandemic has contributed to breakdown in relations between the contracted parties.

### Case study:

We were instructed by an NTU graduate who runs a fashion business. The client business had engaged a manufacturer to produce new season clothes for a third party retailer. The manufacturer had taken thousands of pounds in payment but produced items of extremely poor quality, which the retailer rejected. Our client was faced with a business threatening loss, as the retailer was seeking a refund from our client, and the manufacturer denied any liability and was refusing to reimburse our client.

We reviewed the contractual terms of the manufacturer and gathered evidence in relation to the rejected items. Ultimately, we were able to gather sufficient evidence to prove liability and sent a draft statutory demand to the manufacturer for the debt. In the face of the demand and our resolute approach, the manufacturer agreed to return all monies held to our client in order to settle the issue. The client continues to trade and may not have been able to do so without our pro-bono intervention.





## Employment Law Service

The Employment Law Service provides advice to employees on a range of topics including unfair and wrongful dismissal, unlawful deduction of wages, discrimination and disciplinary matters. The team also offer an Employment Handbook Service for employers, providing start-ups, SMEs, social enterprises, charities and other not-for-profits with up to date employment policy and procedure handbooks.

Covid has led to the significant development of this service due to the numerous changes to employment law, including the introduction of the furlough scheme. Our employment solicitor responded quickly, updating his own knowledge and training our student volunteers on the relevant developments. We produced online resources relating to furlough, including downloadable letter templates for employees seeking to be placed on furlough, and FAQ guides for both employers and employees. Our online resources on furlough received over 380 views between March and June 2020. We have also delivered online seminars on both furlough and long Covid and provided advice on an individual's right to work in a safe environment.

Our students represented a total of 7 individuals in Employment Tribunal proceedings. This was a 45% reduction in cases from the previous year, due to the impact of Covid. However, despite dealing with fewer cases, we significantly increased the financial amount awarded to our clients, from £21,000 last year to over £50,000 this year.



The client provided the following feedback:

*"I cannot say enough about how you and your team looked after my interests. Everything was explained in a very understandable way and for someone who had not been in this position before this was very important. On the court date Gemma was wonderful putting me at my ease as I was quite nervous. She explained the process and the fact that I might be called to the witness box to answer the judges questions (which I was) so I was prepared for this. I cannot speak more highly of Gemma how professional she was and how appreciative she was of my nervousness. In general I cannot thank you all enough for getting me through that tough time."*

### Case study:

As part of our Free Representation Unit (FRU) service, one of our experienced student advisers represented an individual before the Employment Tribunal. It was our client's case that she had been unfairly dismissed and that her employer was in breach of contract. At the time we took on the case, the employer had recently gone into voluntary liquidation and the Employment Tribunal stayed proceedings, on the mistaken understanding that the respondent had gone into compulsory liquidation. Thanks to persuasive legal submissions prepared by our student adviser, the stay of proceedings was lifted by the Tribunal, and the client was ultimately awarded over £25,000, the largest individual award that we have secured in an Employment Tribunal matter to date.

Without our help, the client may have struggled to lift the stay on proceedings, due to the complex legal process, and been unable to obtain judgment in her favour. Or, alternatively, she would have needed to expend fees she could not afford against the considerable risk that she may not receive enough to cover those fees, let alone be compensated for her unlawful treatment.

## Welfare Benefits Service

The Centre continues to work in conjunction with the national charity Free Representation Unit (FRU), to provide representation at Social Security Tribunal appeal hearings. The Centre also acts for clients in advisory matters concerning their entitlement to Welfare Benefits & Tax Credits.

As a result of the impact of the pandemic on the Tribunal and on the wider welfare benefits system, we saw a 33% reduction of cases this year. Notwithstanding this reduction, the service still managed to secure over £680,000 in benefits. The Welfare Benefits Supervisor and our students represented 34 individuals before the Social Security Tribunal and achieved an impressive success rate of 82% (compared to a national average of around 66%). The Centre secured an average benefit entitlement of over £20,000 per case.

During the pandemic, our student volunteers have been able to take instructions, prepare submissions, and conduct advocacy before the Tribunal on a completely remote basis, the first time we have dealt with a tribunal matter from start to finish on a fully online, and paperless, basis.

The client featured in this case study provided the following feedback:

*"Thank you so much!  
Super helpful and  
friendly... couldn't have  
done it without you."*



### Case study:

As part of our Free Representation Unit (FRU) service, we represented a client in their appeal against a decision of the Department for Work & Pensions (DWP) regarding their entitlement to Personal Independence Payment (PIP). The DWP had reviewed our client's pre-existing entitlement to PIP and had decided to completely withdraw this entitlement. Due to the pandemic, it was necessary to take instructions, prepare submissions, and conduct advocacy before the Tribunal all remotely. The client's appeal was successful, and they were awarded the 'Daily Living' component of PIP at the 'enhanced' rate, and the 'Mobility' component of PIP at the 'standard' rate for a period of three years. This success secured approximately £19,000 in benefit entitlement for our client.



## Special Educational Needs & Disability (SEND)

Our SEND service provides assistance to families to help children with special educational needs and disabilities gain the educational provisions and support that they are entitled to and that are most suitable in their particular circumstances.

Having launched this service in the 2018/19 academic year, the Centre further developed the service this year, including successfully completing its first representative matter submitted to the SEND Tribunal. In addition, the Service has conducted advisory matters relating to home-to-school transport, complaints appeal panels, and educational placements.

We are grateful to **Santander Universities UK** for providing us with financial assistance to launch this service and for their ongoing funding in relation to training and development resources.

### Case study:

We represented the parents of a child in their appeal against a decision of a Local Authority as regards their daughter's schooling. The Local Authority's choice of school was felt to be inappropriate to meet the highly complex needs of their daughter, who has autism and complex sensory needs. The Local Authority refused to consent to the parents' preferred school. We provided advice and assistance to the parents on their filing of an appeal to the SEND Tribunal and represented them during the course of negotiations with the Local Authority. We were able to negotiate a constructive agreement with the Local Authority which secured a placement at the parents' choice of specialist school, considered by a range of experts to be the most appropriate placement for the child. The Local Authority conceded the appeal having received our legal submissions, sparing the parents the stress and uncertainty of a tribunal. We subsequently assisted the parents to also secure specialist home-to-school transport for their daughter.

The clients provided the following feedback:

*“We are so grateful for everything you’ve done to get us this result. We couldn’t have done it without your help.... We also felt, when we met with you at the University, that you were completely on our side and that we could absolutely rely on you to do your utmost to help us. When you’re up against such big odds it makes all the difference knowing you’ve got someone like that on your side.”*

## Family

We held a number of family clinics throughout the year, providing a one-off advice service in relation to divorce and separation; financial remedies; child arrangement orders and domestic abuse. In addition, many of our Outreach cases involve family law matters, often involving domestic abuse. Our family solicitor provides supervisory input to these cases, over and above the dedicated family clinics. We will be extending our family offering next academic year due to the large unmet legal need in this area.

## Victims' Rights

This year we launched a new service, offering advice and assistance in relation to the Victims' Right to Review Scheme. This process provides victims the opportunity to challenge a decision by the police or CPS not to prosecute a suspect. We have also provided victim focused advice in relation to criminal investigations and prosecutions.

## Intellectual Property (IP)

We have been able to extend our IP service this year, following the recruitment of a fully qualified Trade Mark Attorney. Our Trade Mark Attorney, with the support of our junior staff members and student volunteers, has been delivering Free Advice Clinics as part of the CITMA Advice Clinic Programme (CITMA is the Chartered Institute of Trade Mark Attorneys). This is a one-off advice service, with the opportunity for further assistance to be provided by the Centre, where there is a need for ongoing advice and assistance. We are planning to launch our own IP Free Advice Clinics next year, targeted at the more local community. To the best of our knowledge, we are the first law school in the country to be able to offer pro bono advice from a qualified Trade Mark Attorney. In addition, as Nottingham Law School is a leading provider of IP courses, it is excellent to be able to expand our IP services alongside our academic and practitioner course offerings.



# Other projects and services for the academic year 2019/20

## Community outreach advice services

*Nottingham Women's Centre and St George's Community Centre*

We provide a drop-in advice clinic, based at both the Nottingham Women's Centre and St George's Community Centre in Netherfield. This is a student-led project and a long-term collaboration which we are proud to continue to offer. This one-off advice service provides clients with initial advice or, in cases involving areas of law outside of our service areas, signposting to other organisations and to useful resources. The drop-in clinics run fortnightly at the respective community centres throughout October to March.

Our two student Project Leaders each recruited six fellow students for their teams. After initial training, our student advisers worked in pairs to interview the clients during the drop-in session and, afterwards, researched the legal issue in order to provide advice. Fortunately, we had held all of our drop-in clinics before the first lockdown, so we were able to provide this as a fully face-to-face service this year. We assisted 42 individuals as part of this service this year, providing advice and assistance across a large range of areas including family, employment and housing.



## Centre student volunteer support teams

This year saw the introduction of two new student teams to support us in the running of the Centre, the New Enquiry Team and the Risk and Compliance Team. Four students provided us with critical support in handling our new enquiries, whilst six students undertook file reviews to ensure compliance with regulatory provisions and to monitor, and encourage, proactive case management. A further four students provided vital administrative support. In addition to assisting with the smooth running of the Centre, this initiative provides our students with valuable insight into the importance of client care and of working within a professional regulated environment.

## Virtual internships

The impact of Covid meant we brought forward the launch of our virtual internship programme, as we were concerned about the number of aspiring lawyers who would be missing work experience opportunities due to the pandemic. The first virtual internship that we launched was focused on employment law, more specifically furlough, to ensure it was topical and engaging for the students. Over 50 students have taken part so far and feedback has been very positive.

The virtual internship has allowed us to offer opportunities to all students, whatever their circumstances. The flexible way in which they can be completed ensures this is a very inclusive approach to volunteering opportunities. In addition, as virtual internships are increasingly used as part of law firm recruitment processes, it is a further way to improve our students' employability and prepares them for life post-study. Our students receive a post-completion certificate for their efforts.

## Intra-curricular activity

In addition to offering extra-curricular opportunities, the Centre also offers a number of intra-curricular opportunities, allowing students to undertake work experience with the Centre as part of their course or module. This allows our students to gain academic credit for their work with the Centre, whilst also developing their practical skills.

## Placement students

Simran Nijjer provided extensive support to the Centre, during her third year on placement as part of her LLB (Sandwich) Degree. During her year, Simran trained to be a FRU Social Security Representative and appeared before the First-tier Tribunal in a number of disability benefit appeals. Simran acted for Appellants in both Personal Independence Payment (PIP) and Employment & Support Allowance (ESA) appeals, achieving a 100% success rate and securing in excess of £70,000 in benefit entitlement for her clients. Simran also provided crucial support to the employment and business and enterprise services.

Simran provided the following feedback about her experience:

*Thank you so much for all your support this year, I really have had the best placement year, and I feel privileged to have had the opportunity to work at the Centre. I really have enjoyed my placement year and I couldn't have asked for a better team or place to do this with. Comparing a year ago to now I really do think I've changed as a person and in confidence, I can't thank you all enough for the support this year.*

We were also joined by four students on 10-week placements, Fariha Afzal, Rachel Francis, Ferdia Rogan and Andrew Sykes, between February and April 2020. The students were provided with experience across a variety of our practice areas, including assisting the criminal supervisor with the Centre's first Victims' Right to Review Scheme case and honing their cross-examination skills via a mock employment tribunal task, based on a real case. It was great having the students with us in the Centre and they all worked incredibly hard. They also showed great resilience and flexibility when we had to convert to fully online working, due to lockdown, halfway through their placements.



## Module activity

This year saw the introduction of a new second year LLB module, Applied Legal Knowledge, which enabled 36 students to undertake a minimum of 24 hours of Centre activity as part of their module. The students worked in groups and attended client appointments, undertook legal research and drafted letters of advice across a number of our service areas including employment, business and enterprise, and family. The students then reflected on their experience within a reflective portfolio, on which they were assessed.

A total of 16 students completed their placement with the Centre, and with our partner organisation Support Through Court, as part of their Law in Practice module, this included both undergraduate and post graduate students.

In addition, 27 students completed Employer Challenges with the Centre. A total of 16 under-graduates gave presentations on ways that the Centre could develop its services to further fulfil unmet legal need in the Nottinghamshire community and 11 LLM students undertook an insolvency challenge, which involved students presenting on recent changes in insolvency case law and preparing case reports for possible publication.

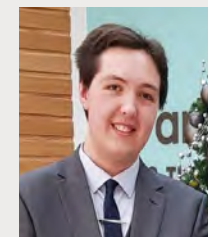
Module activity increased by 140% this year, from 36 students last year to 87 this year. This is set to rise further next year due to the introduction of further modules that incorporate Centre activity. This aligns with the NLS ethos to embed practical skills within every stage of the curriculum and in recognition of how experiential learning improves results and increases employability.

# Module activity increased by 140% this year, from 36 students last year to 87 this year

## Lead Advisers and our Student Pro Bono Committee (SPBC)

This year, we decided to introduce a new initiative in order to recognise our most committed, experienced and talented student volunteers. We selected a total of 14 students from our 18/19 cohort, which was made up of over 300 students, to become our Lead Advisers. We invited all our Lead Advisers, who were continuing their studies with us this year, to form our Student Pro Bono Committee. This made for a very proactive committee as all members have a detailed understanding of the Centre and our work and it enabled them to act as mentors and be a source of information and guidance for our other student volunteers. We are hugely grateful to the SPBC for all their hard work and dedication.

Please see page 32-35 for details of all of our Lead Advisers and SPBC committee members.



## LAC SPBC, by Jack Stuart, Chair of the SPBC (2019/20)

This has been a trailblazing year for the SPBC. We have exponentially increased our visibility and availability to the student volunteers we serve and helped place the Centre on the national map in a number of great pro-bono initiatives.

In Term 1, we hosted the Centre's first ever student volunteer-wide social, where we were able to attract a full-house of student volunteers. It was also a great opportunity for us chat with new volunteers about the wonderful work that awaits them. We hope this has set a precedent for further social events in the not-too-distant future.

Through various fundraising initiatives – including newly designed merchandise and law school-wide bake sales – the SPBC raised over £1,200 for pro-bono charities across the UK, over £1,100 of this was in relation to the LawWorks Challenge, securing NTU a coveted fifth-place spot in the national leader board.

In February 2020, SPBC members represented the Centre at the JUSTICE annual student conference, held in London. We attended roundtable discussions on policy issues affecting a variety of areas, including summary criminal justice

and benefits appeals, an area particularly close to home for the Centre's work. It was extremely encouraging to contribute to JUSTICE's wider policy work on these areas and report back on how the Centre can continue to facilitate access to justice.

Fostering collegiality among students has been a real focus for us this year, which led to such initiatives as the centralised new SPBC email inbox, and an SPBC-hosted open afternoon for NLS students to visit the Centre. This proved an unqualified success, with students across the law-course spectrum coming to talk to us, all of whom left stimulated by the opportunities on offer.

We also contributed to the running and development of the Centre, with a member of the committee representing SPBC at the Centre's management team meetings. This is a unique and exciting opportunity to input into the management and

development of a law firm, at such an early stage of our careers.

The national lockdown did not hamper our engagement with the student community. In our final term we hosted a virtual Q&A careers event for law school students across the board, where we were incredibly fortunate to have seasoned practitioners (including Centre staff and NTU alumni) from a range of practice backgrounds to offer their wealth of experience for our student volunteers. The uptake was substantial and the valued input from our guest speakers was definitely well received.

I want to thank all this year's SPBC members, whose zeal for the Centre's work has helped build up the Centre's profile as a nurturing environment for both students and the community. Naturally there is still always more that can be done, and we look forward to seeing how next year's Committee continues this fantastic work.







### Free Representation Unit

We continue to partner with the Free Representation Unit (FRU) and are proud to be the only FRU provider outside London. We represented a total of 41 individuals in Social Security and Employment Tribunal proceedings this year, with over £600,000 being awarded to those clients in benefits, settlements and compensation.

Whilst providing a hugely beneficial service to the clients, and the tribunal, our students gain outstanding experience, including advocacy and client care skills. Students are required to undergo substantial training and take assessments before taking on a case. Thank you to FRU CEO, David Abbott, and his team, in particular Emma Baldwin and Michael Reed, for providing training to our volunteers and co-ordinating the assessments.

### Support Through Court

This year, 23 of our students volunteered with our partner organisation Support Through Court (STC). We are extremely grateful to Manjit Rai and her team for the training and supervision provided to our students. Our students volunteering with STC, committed over 1400 volunteering hours, supporting over 900 litigants in person in 2019/20, providing a vital service to our local community.

### LawWorks

We are a member of the LawWorks clinics network and continue our close collaboration with them. LawWorks is a charity working in England and Wales to connect volunteer lawyers and clinics with people in need of legal advice, who are not eligible for legal aid and cannot afford to pay and with the not-for-profit organisations that support them. We hold regular meetings with the East Midlands representatives (LawWorks East Midlands Hub), where we share experiences with other pro bono clinics, update each other on our projects and activities, and facilitate referrals of clients in order to make

sure our pro bono work reaches as many individuals in need as possible. This collaboration and local network has proved especially helpful in light of the pandemic. We have been able to share best practice in order to make everybody's transition to the new way of working smooth and efficient. We have also taken part in different information exchange sessions organised by LawWorks in areas such as "data protection and remote working" and "tools, training and resources".

### Pathways to Law

The Centre was one again delighted to provide continued support to the

Pathways to Law programme this year. Pathways to Law is an initiative of The Sutton Trust supporting those aged 16 to 18 from disadvantaged backgrounds into careers in the law. It aims to widen access into the legal profession and improve social mobility. This year we provided three students on the programme with work experience, with each student spending 2 to 3 days with us gaining an insight into the day to day work of a law firm. In addition, in December 2019, we hosted a Client Interviewing Day alongside other NLS colleagues, providing 15 students with an insight into the communication skills needed in order to represent clients effectively.

## We represented 41 individuals in Social Security and Employment Tribunal proceedings, with our clients being awarded over £600,000 in compensation and benefits.

# Data summary

We dealt with 164 cases this year, across seven different service areas. This was 33% less cases than 2018/19, starkly highlighting the impact of Covid on access to justice, as this is explained by factors such as reduced enquiries over the first lockdown and a reduced number of tribunals and court hearings being listed. Notwithstanding the reduction in cases, we did provide increased informal assistance, including via signposting to other organisations and helpful resources and also by implementing increased public legal education initiatives to raise general awareness, particularly around the furlough scheme.

We saw enquiries rapidly and significantly decline over the first period of lockdown, which has resulted in us receiving 5% less enquiries this year. However, enquiries have now returned to pre-Covid levels, if not even higher, and we anticipate that these will

increase further once government initiatives such as furlough and the suspension of housing reposessions end and as the detrimental impact of Covid becomes increasingly apparent. We therefore expect a return to the increasing trend of rising enquiries next academic year.

Notwithstanding the reduction in cases, we recovered **£733,084.07** in benefits and compensation for our clients this year. Although an impressive figure, this was a 38% reduction on last year, again highlighting the devastating impact of Covid, with this being due to the reduction in tribunals and delays to court hearings, particularly in light of the impact of the first lockdown where all court and tribunal hearings were being adjourned. By way of illustration, we dealt with 68 tribunals in 2018/19, compared with 43, this year, a 36% reduction, aligning with the percentage reduction in financial awards for our clients.

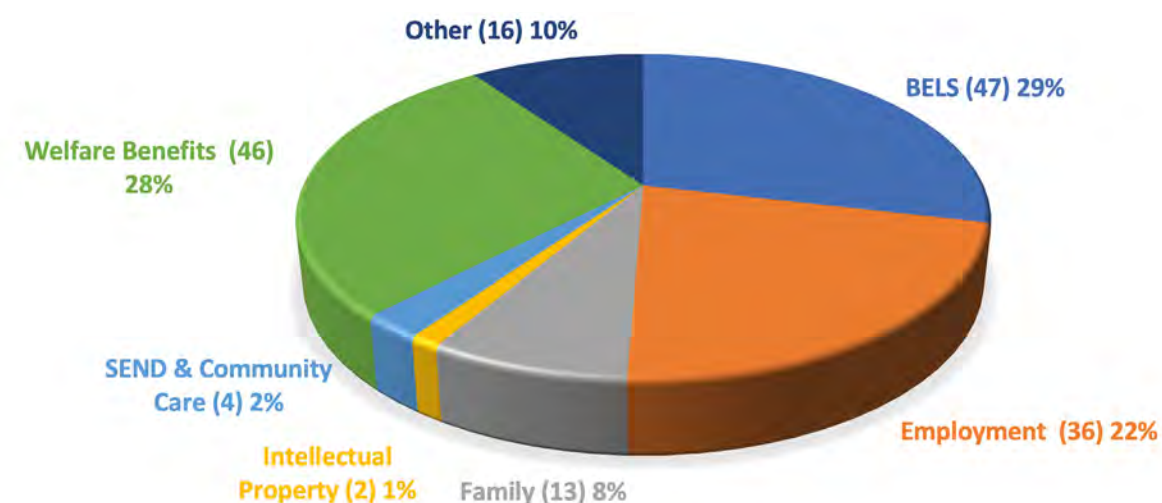
Fortunately, we were able to increase the number of student opportunities this year, despite the pandemic. This was due to the combination of increased intra-curricular activity but also the introduction of virtual internships.

We were delighted to see that, once again, those students working with us in the Centre, outperformed their peers, with an incredible 96.9% achieving a first or 2:1 in their degree, compared with 74% of all NLS students.

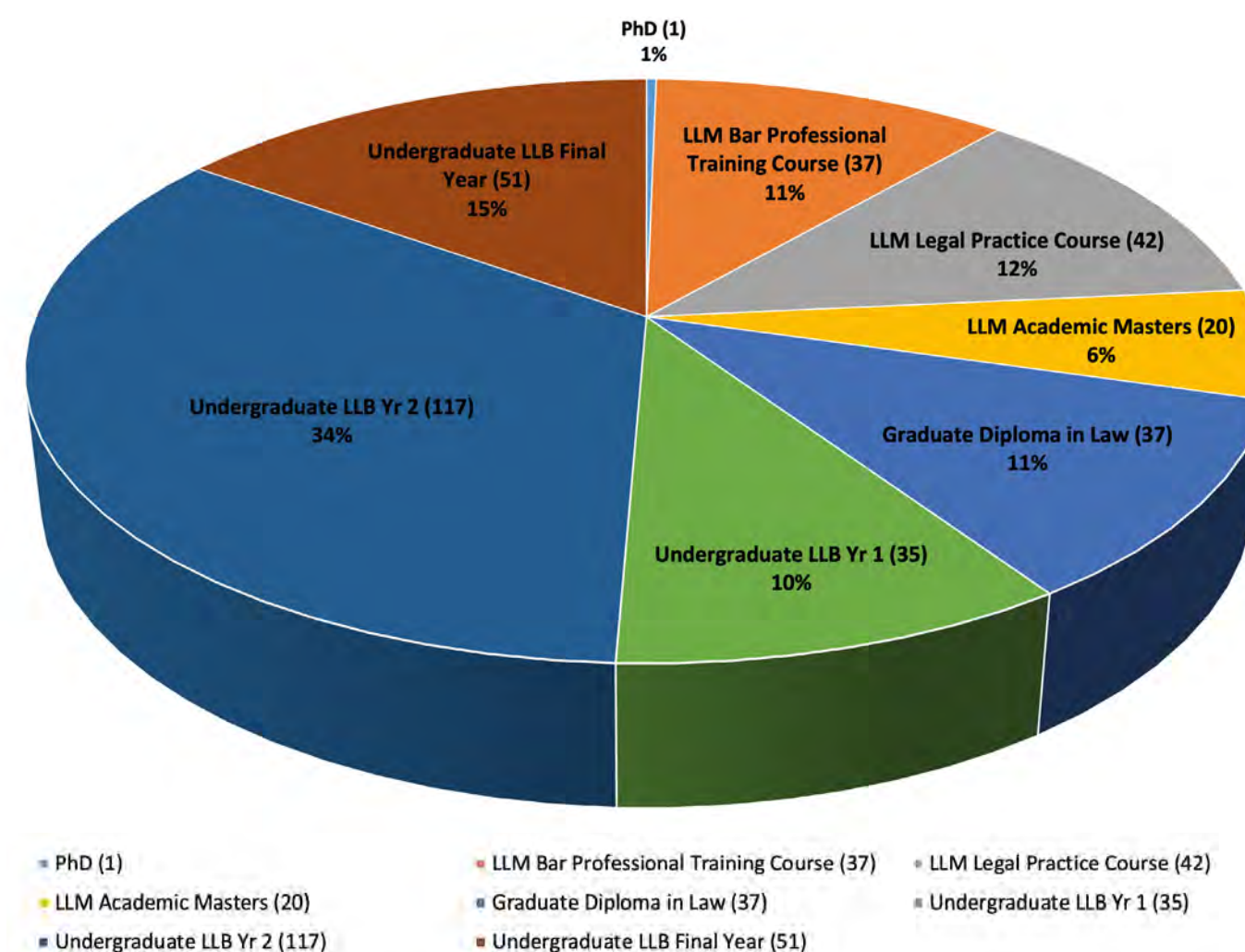
In addition, we are committed to improving equality and diversity and ensuring we provide work experience opportunities to those currently under-represented in the legal profession. In the last academic year, 34% of our student volunteers were from widening participation backgrounds, with 27% declaring a disability and 29% from ethnic minorities.

## We recovered £733,084.07 in benefits and compensation for our clients this year.

Number of cases by matter type (total: 164 cases)

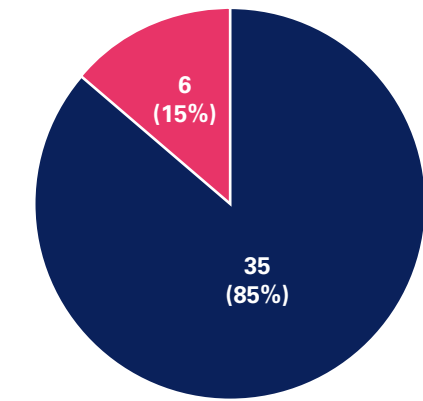


Student volunteers by course (total: 340 students)



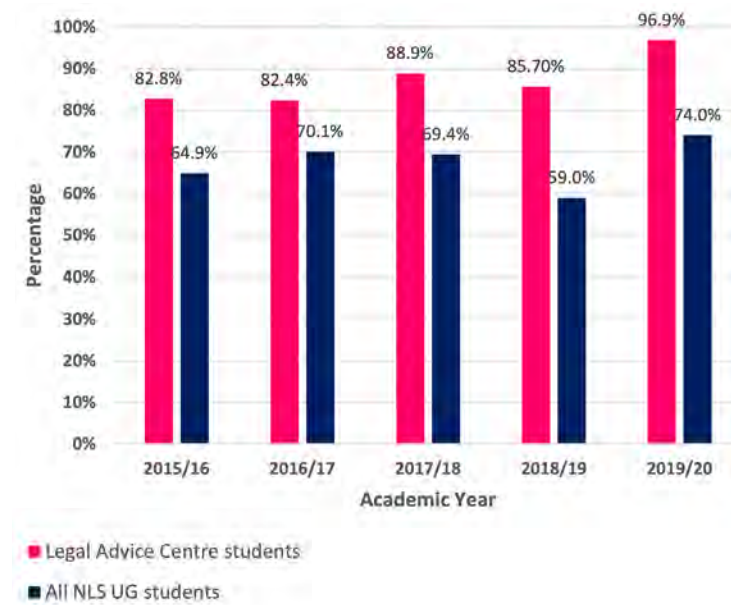


## Total FRU cases: 41

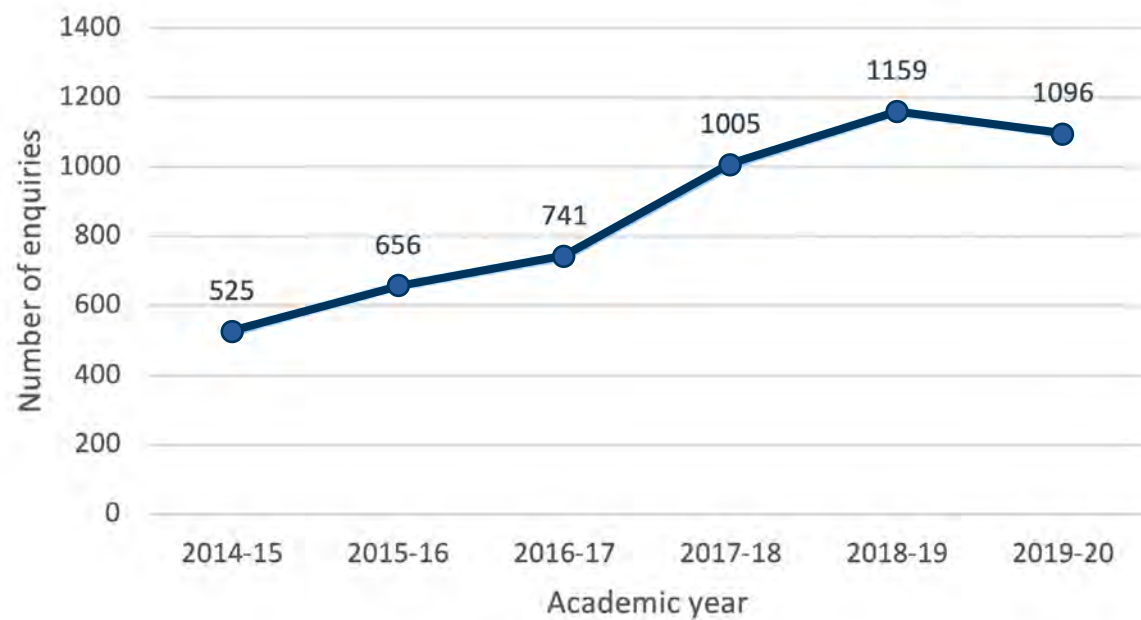


■ FRU Social security ■ FRU Employment

## Percentage of students achieving 2:1/First class degree



## Total number of enquiries received



## Total Compensation/benefit recovered (cumulative total £)



## Total number of opportunities for students to work in Centre activities (5 year trend)

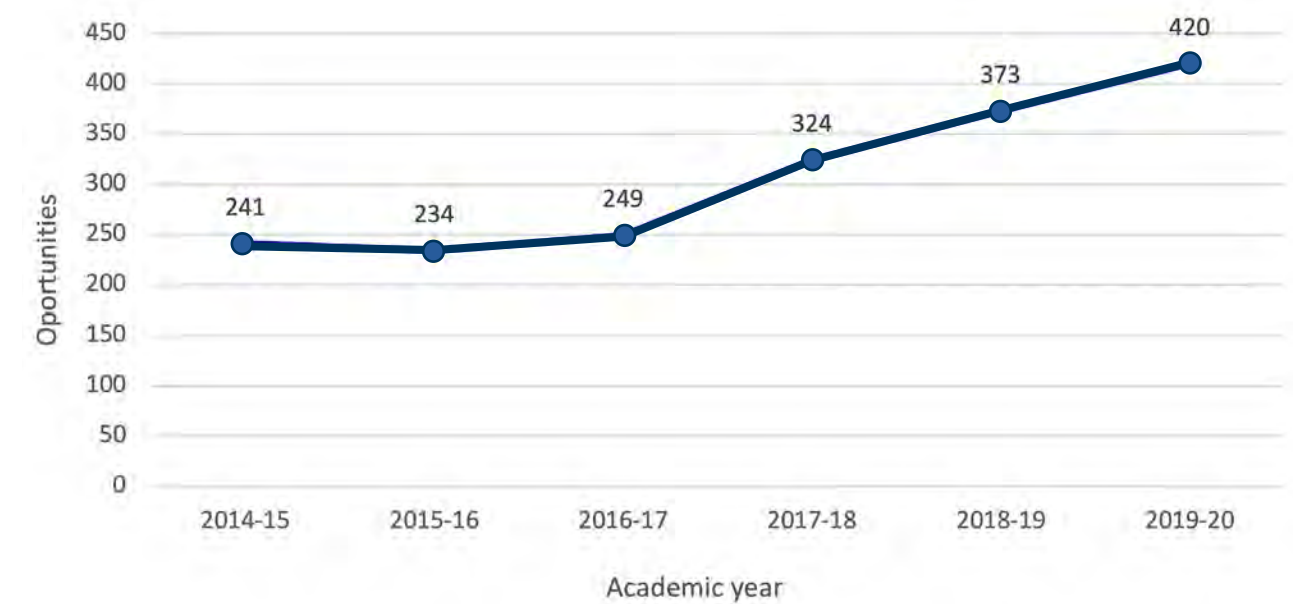
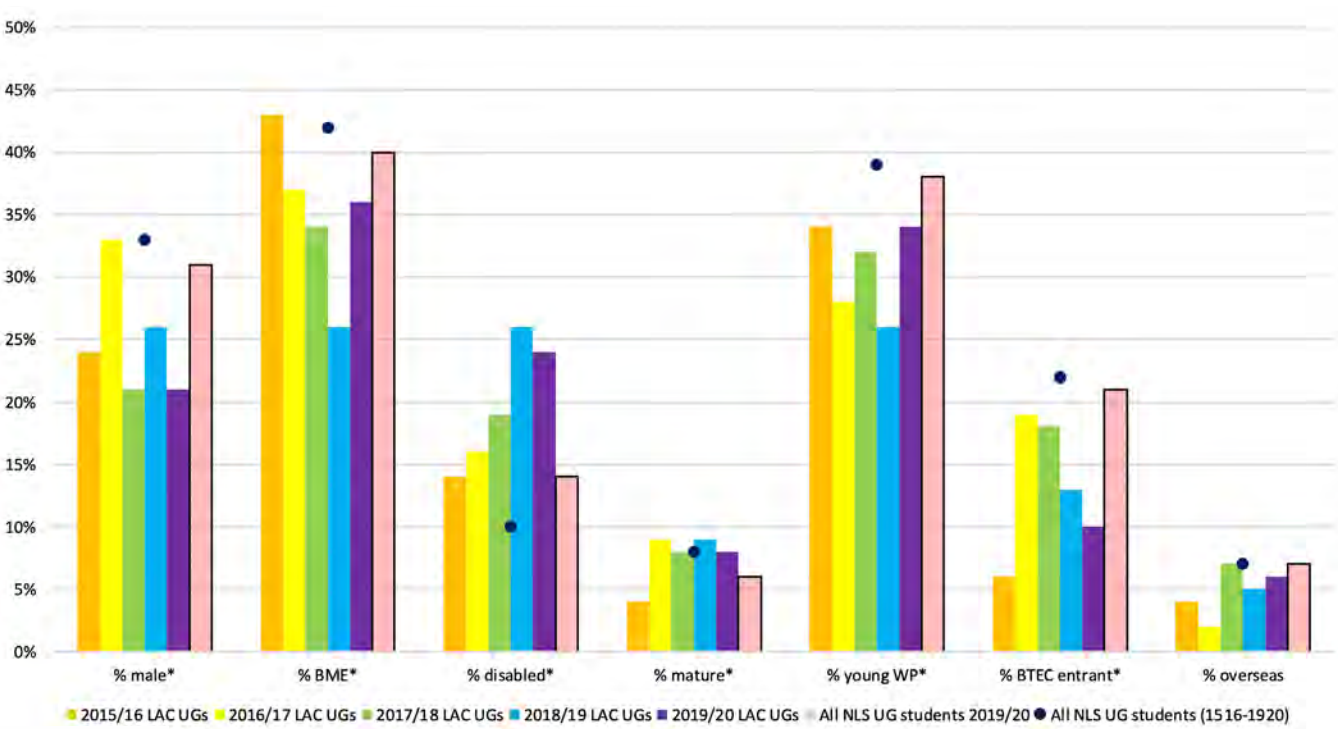


Figure 1: 2015/16 to 2019/20 Legal Advice Centre participants by Success for All groups, compared with underlying NLS student population (undergraduate)

Success for all profile of LAC students - full-time undergraduates

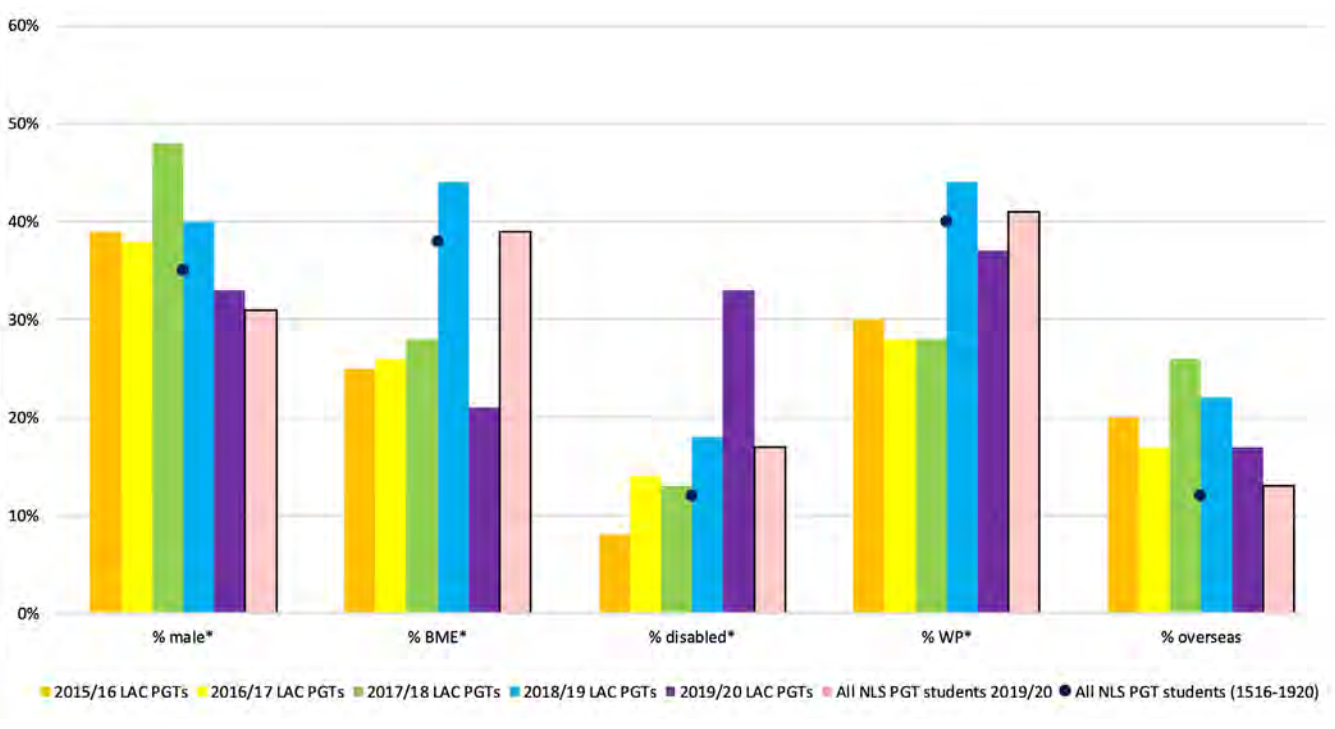


\*UK domiciled

	Male	BME	Disabled	Mature	Young WP	BTEC Entrant	Overseas
2015/16 LAC UGs	24%	43%	14%	4%	34%	6%	4%
2016/17 LAC UGs	33%	37%	16%	9%	28%	19%	2%
2017/18 LAC UGs	21%	34%	19%	8%	32%	18%	7%
2018/19 LAC UGs	26%	26%	26%	9%	26%	13%	5%
2019/20 LAC UGs	21%	36%	24%	8%	34%	10%	6%
All NLS UG students 2019/20	31%	40%	14%	6%	38%	21%	7%
All NLS UG students (1516-1920)	33%	42%	10%	8%	39%	22%	7%

Figure 2: 2015/16 to 2019/20 Legal Advice Centre participants by Success for All groups, compared with underlying NLS student population (postgraduate taught)

Success for all profile of LAC students - postgraduate taught



\*UK domiciled

	Male	BME	Disabled	WP	Overseas
2015/16 LAC PGTs	39%	25%	8%	30%	20%
2016/17 LAC PGTs	38%	26%	14%	28%	17%
2017/18 LAC PGTs	48%	28%	13%	28%	26%
2018/19 LAC PGTs	40%	44%	18%	44%	22%
2019/20 LAC PGTs	33%	21%	33%	37%	17%
All NLS PGT students 2019/20	31%	39%	17%	41%	13%
All NLS PGT students (1516-1920)	35%	38%	12%	40%	12%



# 2019/20 highlights

## Awards

The Centre had a hugely successful year, achieving a number of high profile and coveted awards. We were particular proud to be awarded ABS of the Year 2020 at the Modern Law Awards and that our Callum Scott was crowned Paralegal of the Year 2020 at the same awards. It was also fantastic to see our student volunteers being recognised for their hard work and dedication.



Details of all awards as follows:

### - Law Society Excellence Awards 2019

- Shortlisted in the Excellence in Pro Bono category

### - Modern Law Awards 2020

- **ABS of the Year 2020** – awarded for our innovation and community involvement.
- **Caseworker, Callum Scott, was awarded Paralegal of the Year 2020** for his positive contribution to the reputation of paralegals and the legal profession.

### - LawWorks and Attorney General (Student) Awards 2020

- **Highly Commended – Best Contribution by a Law School**
- **Shortlisted – Best Contribution by an Individual Student (Francesca Shellard)**



ABS of the Year (Modern Law Awards)

Callum Scott (Paralegal of the Year, Modern Law Awards)



### - East Midlands Charity Awards 2020

- All student volunteers were awarded a “Highly Commended” for Volunteer Team of the Year.
- BPTC student, **Jack Stuart** was awarded “Rising Star” in the Volunteer of the Year category.

Our Student Pro Bono Committee placed fifth on the national leader board of the **Law School Challenge 2020**, raising **£1,101.43**, for access to justice charities.

A number of our talented students, also achieved success in various competitions and prize ceremonies, as follows:

### **Jack Stuart, BPTC Student won the Nottinghamshire Law Society’s President’s Cup Negotiation Competition 2019.**

In a twist of fate, Jack was in the final against a fellow BPTC student and Centre Volunteer, Elinor Watts. The Judges praised the high calibre of both finalists: <https://www.nottslawsoc.org/Article/762/>



**Former Placement Student Francesca Shellard and former Legal Officer, Gemma Grant, joined forces to take the title in National Interviewing Competition in Sept 2020:** <https://www.clientinterviewing.com/cic2020.html>. We are fortunate that both Fran and Gemma continued to volunteer in the Centre during 2019/20 as they returned to the their studies.



### NLS Prize Winners 2019/20:

#### **Richard Bagley Outstanding Achievement in Pro Bono Activity:**

Jack Stuart, BPTC Student

Mia Gibson, Final year LLB student

**Dean’s Award for Outstanding Contribution\*:** Annete Kalombodza, Second year LLB student

**Dean’s Award for Community Initiative\*:** Elisa Cronier-Mackie, Final year LLB student

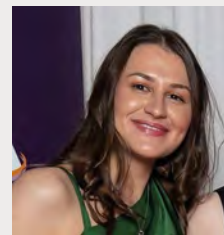
\*Annete’s and Elisa’s contributions to the Centre were a factor in each of their prizes.



### Media coverage:

In celebration of National Pro Bono Week in November 2019, an article by our former placement student, Francesca Shellard, detailing her experience in the Centre, was posted on the national Law Society's website:

<https://www.lawsociety.org.uk/en/topics/junior-lawyers/blogs/my-year-as-an-intern-at-the-nottingham-law-school-legal-advice-centre>



The Law Society

### My year as an intern at the Nottingham Law School Legal Advice Centre

In February 2020, The Lawyer, published an article on Lord Reed succeeding Baroness Hale as President of the Supreme Court written by our business and enterprise solicitor, Ashley Fredericks:

<https://www.thelawyer.com/lord-reed-president-supreme-court/>

### THE LAWYER

### Lord Reed is President of the Supreme Court. What does that mean for justice in the 2020s?

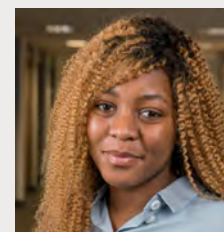
In June 2020, three of our brilliant Lead Advisers and SPBC Committee Members spoke to the local media about their experiences of providing advice during the pandemic

<https://www.ntu.ac.uk/about-us/news/news-articles/2020/06/nottingham-students-giving-free-legal-advice-online-during-lockdown>

<https://www.nottinghampost.com/news/nottingham-news/nottingham-students-giving-free-legal-4252226>

### NottinghamshireLive

### Meet the NTU students who deliver free legal advice during lockdown



### All Things Law 2020

In summer 2020, we were proud to be featured in the Law School's magazine with the Centre getting several mentions, including interviews with former LAC volunteer, now solicitor at local firm Rotheras, Billy Shaw (page 3), Paralegal of the Year, Callum Scott (page 17), and Head of the Centre, Laura Pinkney (page 18).

[www.ntu.ac.uk/allthingslaw](http://www.ntu.ac.uk/allthingslaw)



### Policy reform

As well as facilitating access to justice to our clients, it is an objective of the Centre to assist in policy reform, particularly in areas affecting access to justice and vulnerable persons. Not only is this important in order to ensure a fairer justice system, it provides our students valuable insight into law making process and how to effect change.

We were exceptionally proud that our students played a role in collating data that formed part of the report by not-for-profit organisation, Commons, which helped put pressure on the government to abandon a policy that required defendants to state their nationality at their first appearance before criminal courts. The policy had been accused of 'racialising' the court process and undermining impartiality in the criminal justice system. The report by Commons revealed that 96% of legal practitioners surveyed did not support the policy, while 90% felt it had a negative impact on perceptions

of fairness. It also found that district judges, magistrates and legal advisers were often embarrassed to ask the question, which many defendants did not understand, and conflated nationality with race or ethnicity. The report also noted that the policy was not implemented consistently, with white defendants less likely to be asked for their nationality. A number of our students attended the local Magistrates Court in order to help gather the data that was presented within the report.

Our Supervising Caseworker, Callum Scott, was also appointed to a subgroup of the JUSTICE and Administrative Justice Council's Working Party on 'Reforming benefits decisions'. Callum contributed to the tribunal processes subgroup, the focus of the subgroup being on the identification and evaluation of means to reduce wait times for appellants, and 'to interrogate issues of concern within UK social security tribunals.'



# Client feedback

“Thank you so much for your thorough advice and for taking the time to assist me. It is very detailed and helpful.”

I have really appreciated your clear advice and support. The use of email. So I could access your service. You should all be very proud of your wonderful service, it has been a positive experience... with a positive result. I felt valued and looked after... after a terrible struggle with DWP. (FRU client)

I could not imagine how this service could be improved, it genuinely was exceptional. (SEND client)

I was exceedingly happy with your service. (FRU client)

I would like to take this opportunity to again thank the team at the Legal Advice Centre who have supported me through some difficult times and provided reassurance and guidance when I most needed it. Life would have been much more stressful without you. So thank you very much! (BELS client)

I can't offer advice on how to improve your services because they are simply 100% exceptional! Callum Scott is a truly amazing lawyer and a credit to your team. There is no way we would have got to where we are without him. (SEND client)

# Student feedback



This opportunity has given me critical experience!

The Centre has been an amazing place to work. All of the staff there are really friendly and more than willing to help. It fits in really well around your studies as you more or less get to pick what hours you work.

You gain knowledge and skills that lasts with you forever.

It is a great opportunity that has developed my confidence and reassured me that I wish to work in the legal profession.

The staff at LAC are all so friendly and immediately put you at ease. Mel in particular made me feel really valued as a member of LAC and made my experience volunteering there really enjoyable.

The work was very involved, but it helped a lot that my supervisor (Mathew Game) was available and prepared to help me at every stage.

# Profiles and testimonials of former student volunteers



**Kumari Shyllon-Webb** Kumari graduated in LLB Law in 2020, achieving a 2:1, Outreach project, member of the Student Pro-Bono Committee, Employment Handbook and Lead Student Advisor at LAC.

**Currently:** Complaints Officer, NHS

The Legal Advice Centre was beneficial for me, as it gave me practical experience alongside my degree. I was then able to market myself using these experiences and quote specific skills learnt at the Centre, (client interviewing, drafting). I recommend students to fully immerse themselves into the Centre as, whether going for a legal job or not; the skills are valuable and will add to your CV!!



**Charley-Travis Brennan** Charley graduated in LLB Law in 2020, achieving a 2:1, Outreach project leader, FRU volunteer, member of Student Pro-Bono Committee, LAC Student Ambassador and LexisNexis Ambassador.

Charley is currently working as a Customer Service Advisor at Marshalls PLC. Charley will start his LPC in September 2021 and will commence his training contract with Irwin Mitchell in 2022.

A career within law is competitive which means a law degree on its own isn't enough. You need to be able to demonstrate skills and experiences within a legal environment to give yourself a chance. The Legal Advice Centre has a variety of work where you can develop a plethora of skills which you can then show off to law firms and chambers. You can get involved with as much or as little as you can manage around your University timetable. There's no pressure to take on more than you're comfortable with but I feel that it is important to gain experience doing something at the Centre whilst you can. I guarantee it will help you with your undergraduate degree, it will develop your soft skills and it will enhance your employability inside and outside the legal world.

I was fortunate enough to get involved with the Centre from the first year of my law degree by volunteering on the Netherfield Outreach Project. In the second year of my law degree I was extremely busy. I led the Netherfield Outreach Project, which included recruiting a team of students. I was part of the Centre's Student Pro Bono Committee. As a volunteer with FRU I learnt so much. I would read big bundles of information on the client's case, picking out what I needed to support them which developed my attention to detail. It also gave me exposure to drafting legal documents, such as submissions, which you don't get at many law schools. At both the end of my second and third year, I secured vacation schemes with one of them resulting in a training contract which will commence in August 2022.



**Harry Fraser** graduated from the University of Liverpool in 2013 with a degree in History & Politics. After a short career in hospitality management, he studied the GDL followed by the LPC between 2018 – 2020 at NTU. Since graduating he is currently working as Utilities Specialist Paralegal at Geldards LLP in Nottingham.

Whilst I undertook the GDL in 2018/19, I gained experience in the Legal Advice Centre in the Business and Enterprise Law Service and as a Volunteer Representative with the Free Representation Unit. As I studied the LPC in 2019/20 I was invited to be a member of the Student Pro Bono Committee and helped develop and plan a number of projects within the Centre. A particular highlight for me whilst volunteering was assisting a client remotely during the initial coronavirus lockdown. My experiences were invaluable in helping develop my legal skills. The Centre helped put the law I was learning in seminars and lectures into a real world practical context and this also complemented my studies. Volunteering in the Centre meant that I developed a number of skills that are important for aspiring lawyers: teamwork, drafting, interviewing, organisation, client management and legal research. Working with the Centre helped me secure a number of internships and commercial work experiences whilst I studied and has given me confidence when writing applications for jobs and training contracts.

I would recommend all Nottingham Law School students to volunteer with the Centre. The Centre's staff are very knowledgeable, supportive and set an excellent example of client care and management. It is a given that when applying for vacation schemes, training contracts or paralegal roles that candidates are expected to have some sort of legal experience. There are few opportunities available like the Legal Advice Centre, where students can gain such practical experience in a supportive learning environment.



**Gemma Grant** graduated from NTU (LLB Law) in 2018 achieving a 2:1. She then completed the BPTC, achieving a Very Competent overall. Gemma is currently seeking pupillage and working as a disability advocate for a social enterprise (PIPPS). She has also worked at ACAS and for a national law firm since completing her studies. Gemma is a major scholar of Middle Temple.

My work in the Legal Advice Centre has been instrumental in many of my successes to date. I have been fortunate enough to work as a volunteer in the Centre, and prior to starting the BPTC, as an employee for nine months. The skills I have learnt such as drafting and writing legal opinions for clients have helped me both in my studies and in work.

As an aspiring barrister, the cases I have been exposed to in the Centre have given me many examples to use in application forms and interviews for scholarships and pupillage.

Working as a Free Representation Unit representative through the Centre has also meant that I get to use and improve my advocacy skills in real court rooms with real clients and judges, and not just in the classroom. This has also helped me find paid work as a Disability Advocate since completing my studies.

My first experience of legal conferencing with clients was in the Centre and using the skills I learnt, myself and a colleague from the Centre, went on to win not only the NLS's internal client interviewing competition, but the regional and national finals. We are representing England and Wales in the international competition in April 2021.

I cannot recommend working in the Centre highly enough. I have made lifelong friends and gained skills that will stand me in great stead in my career as barrister.



# The Centre's staff

We have been fortunate to grow the team during the pandemic and we had five new staff members join between March 2020 and September 2020, including a new Casework Supervisor, two placement students and a qualified Trade Mark Attorney, who supervises IP cases over and above teaching commitments. This recruitment will allow us to re-launch our housing service next academic year, which will be of paramount importance in a post-Covid landscape.



## Jenny Chapman, NLS Executive Dean

Jenny is the Executive Dean of Nottingham Law School, a Director of the Centre and also the Centre's Compliance Officer for Legal Practice and Money Laundering Reporting Officer.



## Laura Pinkney, Solicitor and Head of the Legal Advice Centre

Laura is the Head of the Legal Advice Centre and a Director of the Centre and is responsible for the day to day management of the Centre. Laura supervises the Victims' Rights service and also the Nottingham Women's Centre Outreach Service. Laura is also a member of the Law School Senior Management Team.



## Ashley Fredericks, Solicitor

Ashley is a solicitor and leads the Business and Enterprise Law Service, including our civil litigation service and Loughborough University Outreach Service. Ashley is also part of the Centre's operational management team.



## Mathew Game, Solicitor

Mathew is a solicitor and leads the Employment Law Service, including the training and supervision of Free Representation Unit Employment Tribunal representatives. Mathew also supervises the St George's Community Centre Outreach Service and is also part of the Centre's operational management team.



## Professor Jane Jarman, Solicitor and Centre's Training Principal

Jane is a professional indemnity litigation solicitor and professor in legal education. Her expertise is in intellectual property, legal professional privilege and professional ethics as well as the education of legal practitioners and regulation of legal practice. Jane supports and advises on regulatory and compliance matters within the Centre and utilises her expertise to support our Business and Enterprise Law Service and Intellectual Property Service, over and above her academic commitments.



## Callum Scott, Supervising Caseworker

Callum supervises the Special Educational Needs and Disability (SEND) Service and the Community Care Service. Throughout 2019/20, Callum also supervised the Welfare Benefits Service, including the training and supervision of the Free Representation Unit Social Security Tribunal representatives.



## Emma McGowan, Supervising Caseworker

Emma joined us in September 2020 and will take over supervision of the Welfare Benefits Service. Emma will also supervise our Housing Service, when this is relaunched next academic year.



## Katie Smith, Senior Lecturer and Solicitor

Katie supervises the Centre's family law cases over and above her academic commitments.



## Peter Vaughan, Lecturer and Trade Mark Attorney

Peter joined us in March 2020 and supervises our Intellectual Property and Trade Mark Service over and above his academic commitments.

# The Centre's staff continued



**Carlota Gonzalez Laynez, Practice Manager**

Carlota is our Practice Manager and is responsible for overseeing the administration of the Centre and supporting the Head of the Centre with the day to day running of the Centre.



**Melissa Bailey, Administrator**

Melissa is our Administrator and is responsible for providing full administrative support to the Centre, including arranging client appointments, dealing with new enquiries and supporting the facilitation of student opportunities.



**Jack Stuart, Paralegal**

Jack has recently graduated from the Bar Professional Training Course at the Law School and has joined us a paralegal in September 2020, supporting all of the Centre's Service areas.



**Simran Nijjer, Legal Assistant (Placement Student 19/20)**

Simran joined us as a Legal Assistant in September 2019 and spent a year with the Centre as part of her LLB (Hons) Sandwich Degree. Simran supported all of the Centre's services and also provided administrative support. Simran will now return to her studies, to complete the final year of her degree.



**George Greenfield, Legal Assistant (Placement Student 20/21)**

George joined us a Legal Assistant in September 2020 as part of his LLB (Hons) Sandwich Degree. George will support all of the Centre's services, providing paralegal and administrative support.



**Matilda Kapala, Legal Assistant (Placement Student 20/21)**

Matilda joined us a Legal Assistant in September 2020 as part of her LLB (Hons) Sandwich Degree Course. Matilda will support all of the Centre's services, providing paralegal and administrative support.

You will find full profiles of the Centre's staff on our website.

**Support from the wider NLS and NTU community:**

We are also grateful to our many other NLS and NTU colleagues, both academic and professional services, who support the Centre in a variety of ways, helping us to deliver our services to both clients and students.

**Our 2019/20 Student Pro Bono Committee:**

- Annete Kalombodza
- Danielle St Clair
- Elisa Cronier-Mackie
- Francesca Shellard
- Gemma Grant
- Harry Fraser
- Jack Stuart
- Kumari Shyllon-Webb
- Molly Brown
- Nirav Shah
- Simran Nijjer

**Our additional 2019/20 Lead Advisers:**

- Charley Travis Brennan
- Ed Gould
- Ellie Caffrey



Nottingham Law School Legal Advice Centre  
Chaucer Building,  
Goldsmith Street,  
Nottingham  
NG1 5LP

Tel: +44 (0)115 848 4262

Email: [nls.legaladvicecentre@ntu.ac.uk](mailto:nls.legaladvicecentre@ntu.ac.uk)

[www.ntu.ac.uk/nlslegaladvicecentre](http://www.ntu.ac.uk/nlslegaladvicecentre)



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