

# NLS Legal Annual Report 2024/25



**NLS Legal**  
Nottingham Law School

**10** CELEBRATING  
10 YEARS



**PRO BONO  
RECOGNITION  
LIST**  
ENGLAND & WALES

About us	03
Foreword	04
Acknowledgements	05
Transformative impact of the Hunter donation funding	06
Practice areas	08
Data and feedback summary	14
Feedback and testimonials	18
Intra-curricular activity	22
Other services and projects	25
Awards and recognition	28
NLS Legal team	30

# About us

NLS Legal is Nottingham Trent University's (NTU) teaching law firm and forms part of Nottingham Law School's (NLS) progressive approach to legal education and training.

NLS Legal, an exempt charity, is a wholly owned subsidiary of NTU and holds an Alternative Business Structure (ABS) licence from the Solicitors Regulation Authority. The firm is the only model of its kind in the UK, providing the opportunity for our students to obtain valuable work experience and develop their practical skills alongside their studies.

Legal advice and representation is offered on a pro bono basis to individuals and organisations that cannot access legal aid or afford legal representation across a large range of service areas, providing a vital service to the community.

NLS Legal is multi award-winning, and has received regional, national, and international recognition. We are proud to be celebrating our 10-year anniversary in 2025.

The information and data within this report covers the period 1 September 2024 to 31 August 2025.

# Foreword by the Head of NLS Legal

## Welcome to our 2024/25 Annual Report.

This year marks our 10-year anniversary, and I am so proud of what NLS Legal has achieved during the past decade. The firm has won numerous national awards and gained international recognition. But more importantly it has inspired our students to engage in community activity for the public good, supported access to justice and prepared our students to excel in their chosen profession.

It is truly amazing that this year we hit a major milestone, securing over **£7 million in financial awards for our clients**. This impressive figure is in a large part due to the fantastic work of our social welfare team and the students that assist them, and we were extremely proud to see **Emma McGowan**, our Housing and Welfare Benefits Supervisor, win the **Community Champion Award** at the **Nottinghamshire Law Society Awards 2025**.

Thank you to the university, our incredible students, and everyone who has supported us over the past 10 years. We're excited to keep empowering and inspiring the next generation of lawyers—and to continue achieving outstanding results for those who would otherwise be denied access to legal advice and representation.

**Laura Pinkney,**  
Head of NLS Legal



## Funding and Governance

The budget for NLS Legal is supported by NTU and NLS. NLS Legal also receives some funding from private donors and commercial organisations. We are immensely grateful to the generous financial support of a number of individuals and organisations which have supported further expansion of the firm.

NLS Legal Ltd (trading as NLS Legal) is a company limited by guarantee with its sole member being NTU. NTU covers the costs of all the property, assets, staff, and other services required by the firm.

NLS Legal Board of Directors and ABS Management Board 2024/25:

**James Lacey**, NTU Director of Finance

**Rebecca Jenkyn**, University Secretary and Clerk to the NTU Board of Governors

**Joanne Cenic**, Head of Management Accounting and NLS Legal's Compliance Officer for Finance and Administration

**Jenny Chapman**, NLS Executive Dean and NLS Legal's Compliance Officer for Legal Practice

**Laura Pinkney**, Head of NLS Legal

## Acknowledgements

NLS Legal would not exist without the innovative vision and the generous financial assistance provided by NTU. We would like to thank the University's **Board of Governors**, the **Vice-Chancellor** and the **University Executive Team** for their commitment and unwavering support to NLS Legal. We take this opportunity to say a big thank you and a fond farewell to our former Vice-Chancellor, **Professor Edward Peck CBE**, who left NTU in July 2025. Edward was a huge supporter of NLS Legal, once describing the firm as "the jewel in the crown" of NTU. We trust we made Edward proud during his tenure, and we look forward to welcoming and working with the new NTU Vice-Chancellor, Professor Dave Petley, in 2025/26 and beyond. We also take the opportunity to say a big thank you to **Steve Denton** for his additional support during his time as Interim Vice-Chancellor.

We express our deepest appreciation to the late **Professor Martin Hunter** and his wife **Mrs Linda Hunter** for the very generous financial donations that have enabled NLS Legal to provide additional student opportunities over many years, allowing us to extend our services to the community. Please see pages 6 and 7 to read about the life-changing impact on the first beneficiaries of the significant gifts made by Professor Martin Hunter and Mrs Linda Hunter. We will be forever grateful for the generosity shown and it is our privilege to be able to facilitate a lasting legacy on behalf of them.

Thank you also to **Richard Bagley** and **Honorary Professor Paul Bowden** and **Mrs Lynne Bowden** for always championing our vision and for supporting us in various ways over many years.

A huge thank you to **Hodge, Jones & Allen Solicitors**, who generously volunteer their time enabling us to

expand our services to our clients and offer a broader range of experience to our student volunteers. It is a pleasure working with **Daniel Denton** and the team to further our shared commitment to access to justice.

We also want to say a massive thank you to **Clio** who generously provide us with free access to their case management software to support the smooth running of our pro bono service.

Sincere thanks to **Santander Universities UK** who have continued to provide vital funding to support our work. Following a successful launch in 2022/23, we again utilised the funding to provide students undertaking the NTU Black Leadership Programme with grants to support work experience placements. This year, we were able to extend this to other students of Black heritage. Nine students completed a one-week placement with us, and we are grateful to Santander for enabling us to provide transformative opportunities to our students (read more at page 26).

We also want to say a huge thank you to the **students** that work with us. Our students continue to make us proud, impressing us with their talent, dedication, and enthusiasm.

In addition, we are grateful to all the organisations and charities that we work with and that form part of our referral network, who also offer such vital assistance to the community.

Our sincere thanks to:

- AskUS Nottingham
- Bipolar Lift
- Business and Intellectual Property Centre
- Chartered Institute of Trade Mark Attorneys (CITMA)
- Citizen's Advice Nottingham and District
- Citizen's Advice Broxtowe
- Clifton Library
- Derbyshire Law Centre
- Environmental Law Foundation
- Free Representation Unit
- Improving Lives
- JUNO Women's Aid
- Kee Mediation
- LawWorks
- Nottingham County Council – Benefits Team and i-work
- Nottingham Family Court
- Nottingham Law Centre
- Nottinghamshire Law Society
- Nottingham Women's Centre
- NTU Enterprising Ashfield Team
- SEND Collaborative
- St George's Community Centre, Netherfield
- Support Through Court
- The Ark Gedling

## Transformative impact of the Hunter donation funding

The late Professor Martin Hunter practised law for over half a century and was one of the world's leading experts on international arbitration. He was a visionary lawyer and inspiration to the legal profession and provided critical support on the establishment of NLS Legal. NTU was proud to honour his achievements with the award of an honorary doctorate in 2019.

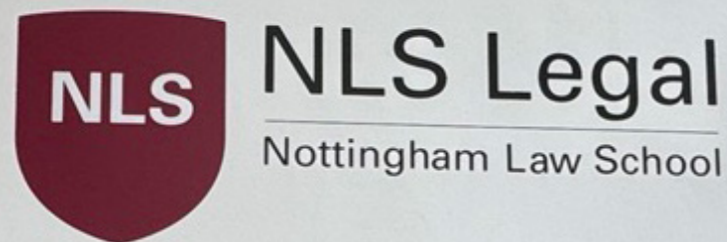
We are exceptionally grateful for the financial donations and support provided by the late Professor Hunter and his wife Mrs Linda Hunter (also a solicitor) over many years. Their generosity has supported numerous NLS

Legal initiatives and student opportunities, and this year has supported two 12-month fixed term Legal Assistant positions, awarded to NLS graduates, and enabled us to employ our 2025/26 placement student two months earlier than planned.

Please do read on to hear the life changing impact the support of the late Professor Martin Hunter and Mrs Linda Hunter has had on NLS students, and those they have helped during their time with us to date:



Students from left to right: Phoebe Colton, Kareem Al-Dairi, Sanija Stopina.



### Phoebe Colton, Legal Assistant (2024/25)

Finding that first stepping stone for a legal career after graduation can be a difficult experience. I would like to express how extremely grateful I am for Martin Hunter, whose career I find inspiring, and Linda for enabling me to embrace this opportunity.

As my confidence and capability have grown, I have progressed to leading initial client meetings and conducting follow-up meetings which include legal advice. My supervisor, Katie Smith, has enabled me to work on cases independently with supervision and work with students. This transition has allowed me to develop key client-facing skills and a deeper understanding of the practical application of legal knowledge. Watching and learning from Katie as well as other colleagues at NLS Legal has provided me with valuable insight to the realities of a career as a solicitor, and opportunities to combine my interpersonal skills and legal knowledge.

Working as a legal assistant has helped me prepare for my next role as a trainee solicitor by improving my confidence and affirming both my aspirations and passion for the work. When I first started this job, I felt uneasy about making mistakes or receiving negative feedback, but now I realise that learning is so much more important, and it is only going to improve my knowledge and resilience.

This experience has grown my confidence and passion and aided me in gaining a training contact for September 2025!

### Sanija Stopina, Legal Assistant (2024 to present)

I am extremely grateful for the donation, which has enabled me to take on the role of legal assistant at NLS Legal. The skills, experience, and opportunities I have gained have been truly invaluable, and it is an honour to receive this award in Martin's memory.

This hands-on experience has given me a practical understanding of legal work that goes far beyond what is taught in undergraduate and postgraduate studies. I have come to appreciate how transferable the skills developed in one practice area are to another, highlighting the interconnected nature of legal practice. It has also affirmed my enjoyment of working in a client-facing role because there is a deep sense of fulfilment that comes from helping people on a pro bono basis, especially within the community I have grown up in.

During the last 12 months, I assisted supervisors in the conduct of 17 welfare benefits cases, six housing cases and one employment case. Since September, I have taken the lead (under supervision) on 14 cases and have supervised students on 10 cases. This progression reflects my growing ability to manage casework independently, while also supporting the development of students by sharing my experience and contributing to their learning and exposure to the legal world. This has continued to motivate me in my progression as a legal assistant and becoming a barrister.

### Kareem Al-Dairi, Legal Assistant (placement student) (July 2025 to present)

I wish to express my sincere gratitude for the generous donation, which enabled me to begin my placement as a Legal Assistant with NLS Legal two months earlier than expected.

When I was offered this placement, I was incredibly excited by the opportunity to work with such a dedicated and inspiring team. Thanks to the financial support from the Hunter family, I've been able to gain early exposure to real legal practice— an experience that has already had a significant impact on both my personal and professional development.

Since starting, I've been actively involved in a wide range of tasks that have helped me build my skills and confidence. As part of the Employment Law team, I've organised drop-in sessions for clients, drafted letters of advice, conducted legal research, and even advertised for student volunteers to help support our service. These responsibilities have given me a first-hand understanding of how employment issues affect real people and how legal professionals can play a role in providing practical support and access to justice.

Starting this placement early has allowed me to develop not just my legal knowledge, but also key professional and interpersonal skills. Before this, I often lacked confidence when stepping into unfamiliar situations. Now, I feel much more prepared to take on responsibility, contribute meaningfully to casework, and engage directly with clients.

We are so grateful to the Martin and Linda Hunter for supporting us in our work and providing life changing opportunities to our students and graduates.

# Practice areas

## Civil Litigation and Business Service

Our civil litigation and business service provides key support for clients in two main areas: civil litigation, where we assist with contentious legal matters, and business, where we advise on non-contentious commercial matters.

### CASE STUDIES:

This year, we supported clients dealing with various breach of contract disputes where jurisdictional issues presented additional obstacles. These situations frequently arose from informal arrangements that later became contentious. In addition to advising on the underlying merits, we guided clients through the jurisdictional aspects of their claims and set out the practical steps they needed to take. With this support, we were able to help clients to achieve positive outcomes in complex circumstances.

Within our business service, we worked with a small business on issues arising from their franchise agreement, ensuring they were aware of their rights and the options available to them as the contractual period drew to a close.

**“I would like to thank [Charis], Megan and the team for all your help and advice. It has been much appreciated and I am very grateful.”**

Client feedback



## Criminal Law Service

Our criminal service is divided into two strands: our victims' rights service and a service for those serving custodial sentences.

## Victims' Rights Service

### CASE STUDY:

We supported a client with complaints to the police, following a prolonged lack of inaction on their part further to numerous reports by our client of anti-social behaviour by their neighbour. We accompanied the client to a meeting with the police with a view to resolving the matter. The case was complicated by the fact the neighbour experienced mental health difficulties, so there was an understandable reluctance to prosecute, albeit there was an acknowledgement of the extent to which the neighbour was detrimentally impacting the life and wellbeing of our client and her family. Following successful liaison between the police and the local housing association, the anti-social neighbour was moved to another property, successfully resolving the matters for the client.

**“I had a very complex case and very frustrating at times, but Rachel Williams was very professional and patient, I couldn't thank her enough! I would highly recommend NLS Legal.”**

Client feedback

## Prisoner Advice Service

### CASE STUDY:

We also continue to assist those who remain either in custody or secure hospital settings serving Imprisonment for Public Protection (IPP) sentences. IPP sentences have been described by Lord Brown, a former justice of the UK Supreme Court, “as the greatest single stain on our criminal justice system”. This assistance has included providing updates on changes in the law, proposed changes and introducing the clients to charities who can offer ongoing support as well as campaigning for release. Our work in this area highlights the injustice to those that remain detained under these sentences and raises awareness with our students about a regime that is no longer taught, as they were abolished in 2012, but continues to negatively impact thousands of prisoners and their families.

## Employment Law Service

The employment law service advises clients in unlawful deduction from wages and unfair dismissal matters. We also provide one-off advice on more complex areas of employment law, as well as offering ongoing support up to and including representation at the Employment Tribunal.

### CASE STUDY:

A highlight of the year involved assisting and representing a claim that ultimately settled for a five-figure sum. A number of our students were involved in the case and observed the different parts of being a representative at an employment tribunal, which ultimately resulted in a successful settlement in this instance.

“The service that was provided has been fantastic. I would definitely recommend it to someone who needed legal advice.”

Client feedback

## Family Law Service

The family law service provides advice, assistance and representation on domestic abuse, child arrangements, divorce and financial remedy matters. This year the service has provided many clients with one-off advice, and assisted a number of clients with court applications, negotiations and representation at court. This has provided valuable opportunities for our student volunteers, who have gained hands on experience of these matters, alongside their studies.

### CASE STUDY:

This year we assisted a client who was a respondent in a child arrangements case. The client was eligible for legal aid funding but due to the delay in processing their application, they were left without advice and representation at the first court hearing. As there was domestic abuse in their relationship, the client was vulnerable and concerned about attending court, especially alone. We advised the client and represented them at the first court hearing, and ensured special measures were in place for that hearing. We negotiated an interim contact agreement with the other party and agreed directions for the case to proceed. This meant the client felt safe and supported at court during a very difficult time and received practical advice and support at a vital stage in the process.

## Housing Service

The housing service caseload focuses on homelessness, possession matters, deposit deductions and disrepair as these reflect the main issues faced by our local community. Our student volunteers have been exposed to dealing with clients who are often facing crisis and learn to explain and apply complex legal concepts to client matters. For most of our students, this is the first time they have dealt with an area of law not taught on their courses.

### CASE STUDY:

We assisted a client with a deposit dispute, an area for which there is no legal aid funding available. The relationship between the client and their former landlord had broken down, and we were instructed to negotiate on behalf of our client. On reviewing the case papers, we identified procedural non-compliance by the landlord and advised the client on the resulting options. This allowed us to assist the client to negotiate with the landlord throughout the pre-action stage of their potential claim. The pre-action letter resulted in the landlord almost immediately offering to repay the deposit in full to our client. This prevented the need to issue proceedings, saving our client time and money to pursue this further. It also allowed them to draw a line under this stressful matter and enforce their rights in an effective and efficient manner.

Client feedback

"I am really grateful for the advice and help Katie and Phoebe have given. They made me feel reassured at a time which was very stressful."



## Intellectual Property Service

The intellectual property (IP) service helps a wide range of small businesses and individuals with their IP matters. The support we provide is in a complex area to those who would otherwise be faced with going alone and would likely, in the case of contentious matters, face detrimental outcomes such as ceasing trading or coming under significant financial strain. This year has seen an increased focus on contentious work, assisting clients whose right to use their name is being challenged, or those who need to enforce their own IP rights.

### CASE STUDY:

We assisted a sole trader who had received a letter from a trade mark owner demanding they change their name, requesting a significant amount of money in reparation, and threatening court proceedings. We assisted with the selection of a new brand and drafted a settlement agreement to bring matters to a close on terms that were significantly improved on that which had been requested, resolving the matter without court proceedings.

The feedback we receive shows the value placed on this service with one client commenting,

**“I can't imagine where I would be both financially and emotionally without your assistance.”**



## Special Educational Needs and Disability Service

NLS Legal's special educational needs and disability (SEND) service assists families of children and young people with special educational needs. This service advises clients in securing the educational, health and social provisions they are legally entitled to and includes representation at the SEND First-Tier Tribunal.

### CASE STUDY:

We supported the parents of a child who had requested a special school be named in the EHC Plan after the setting named were unable to meet his special educational needs. The parents had submitted an appeal to the SEND Tribunal, and we worked collaboratively with the Local Authority (LA) during the proceedings to resolve the matter. Our involvement contributed to a successful outcome, with the appeal being concluded through a consent order naming the parents preferred placement after discussions with the LA. This ensured the child's needs would be appropriately met in the right setting.

**“Thank you once again, we really couldn't have navigated this process without you. I can't begin to explain how valuable it has been having your expertise and advice!”**

Client feedback

## Welfare Benefits Service

The welfare benefits service advises clients on entitlement to benefits and provides representation at Social Security Tribunal appeal hearings.

We saw a record number of student volunteers taking on several cases throughout the year, an almost 250% increase on the last academic year. This has provided those students with more practice experience at the start of their careers.

### CASE STUDY:

This was an appeal to the First Tier Tribunal against a negative personal independence payment (PIP) application. Our client had no electronic literacy and struggled to leave their home due to extensive sciatic arthritis. This matter presented our student volunteers with an opportunity to represent a client in a live setting and to gain advocacy experience, under supervision. Our student volunteer represented the client at the in-person hearing where their submissions were accepted in full by the judge, the decision overturned, and our client was awarded PIP at the rate we had asked. The client received a backdated payment of approximately £5,000 and a guaranteed award of just under £16,000.

**“Thank you very much for everything, it has made the world of difference.”**

Client feedback

The client also very kindly sent our student volunteer a thoughtful gift and a hand-written card, thanking them for their unwavering and invaluable support throughout the appeal process.

**We saw a record number of student volunteers taking on several cases throughout the year, an almost 250% increase on the last academic year.**

## Contested Probate and Personal Injury in collaboration with Hodge Jones & Allen Solicitors

Following a successful launch in 2023/24, we continued to offer a one-off advice service for personal injury matters via our collaboration with national firm, Hodge Jones & Allen. The personal injury service assists those who have been injured through no fault of their own and who need free, accessible advice to understand their rights and potential next steps.

This year, we extended that collaboration to include a contested probate service, providing one-off advice to clients with concerns about a deceased person's estate or wishing to challenge the validity of a will.

We assisted a total of eight clients via this collaboration and we are incredibly grateful to Hodge Jones & Allen for enabling us to expand both our services to the community and our student opportunities.

# Data and feedback summary

This year we dealt with over **325 cases**, across **11 different practice areas**, and provided **739 students** with over **1,100 opportunities**. We were delighted to secure over **£510,000 in financial awards** for our clients, bringing our cumulative total to an impressive **£7.3 million**.

We are thrilled to see that the data once again confirms that real-world work experience alongside studies leads to improved outcomes, with **88%** of our student volunteers achieving a **2:1 or first-class** degree, compared with 78% of their peers.

In addition to the client and student testimonials featured at pages 18-19 and 20-21, we are proud to report that, based on our student feedback survey data, **94%** of our students said they **would recommend volunteering** at NLS Legal to future students. For **79%** of our students this was their **first work experience in a law firm**, underpinning the importance of being able to offer this opportunity. The students also told us that the **top three skills** developed were drafting, listening and responding, and legal research. Based on our client feedback survey data, 90% of the clients who completed our client survey said our service was 'excellent' (83%) or 'good' and 93% said they 'would recommend our services'.

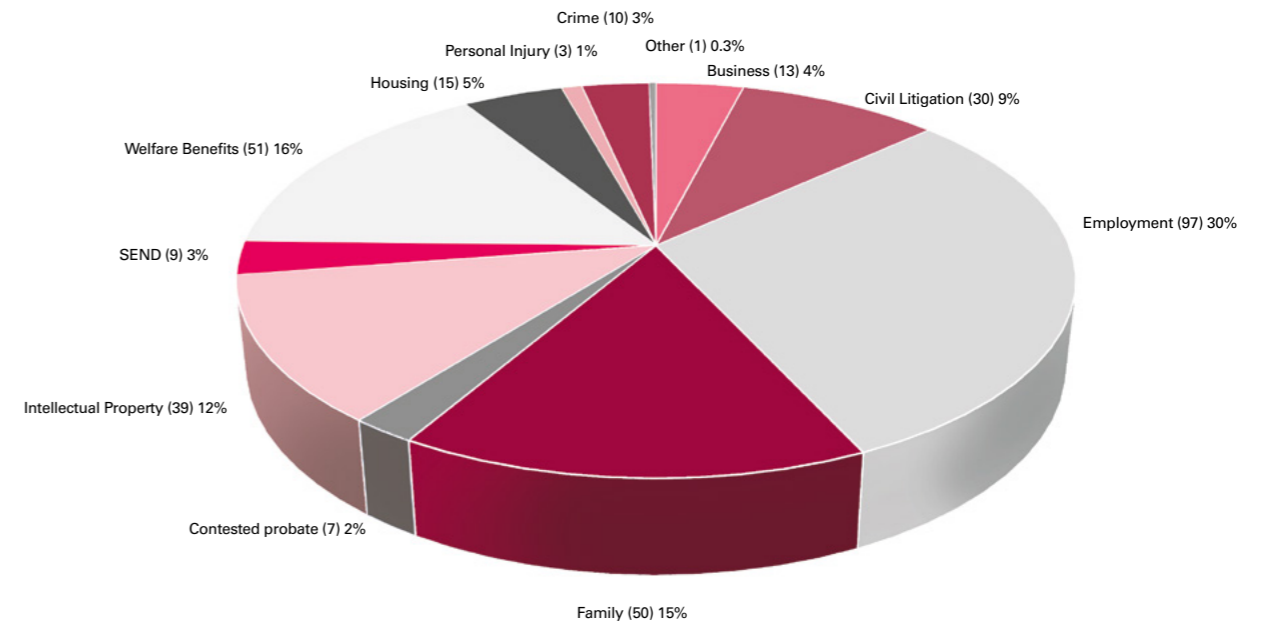
We are committed to **inclusivity and diversity** by removing barriers to provide work experience to under-represented groups in the legal profession. NTU is one of the most diverse universities in the UK and this is reflected in the demographic of our NLS Legal students. We were pleased that once again, our data demonstrates that our student cohort is a diverse one, with 57% of our student volunteers being from minoritised ethnic groups, 23% declared a disability and 40% of undergraduates were from low socio-economic backgrounds.

For more detailed information, please scan this QR code.

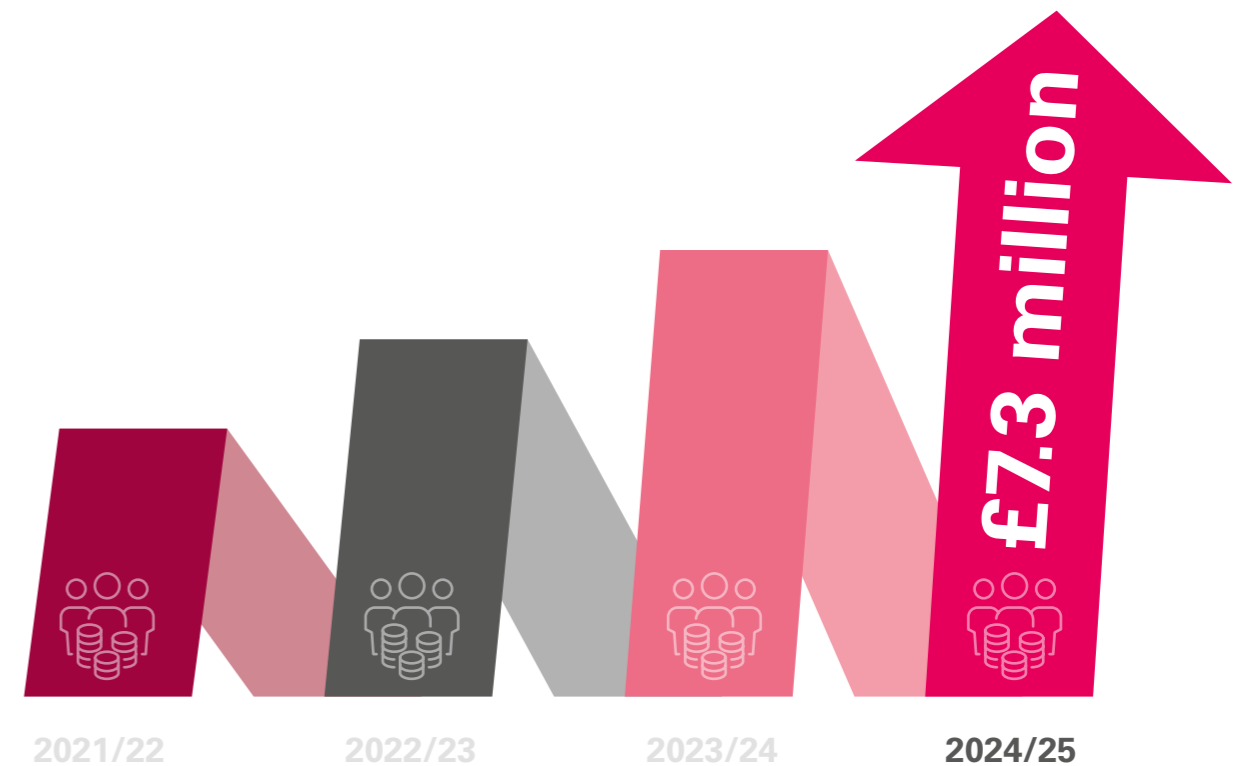


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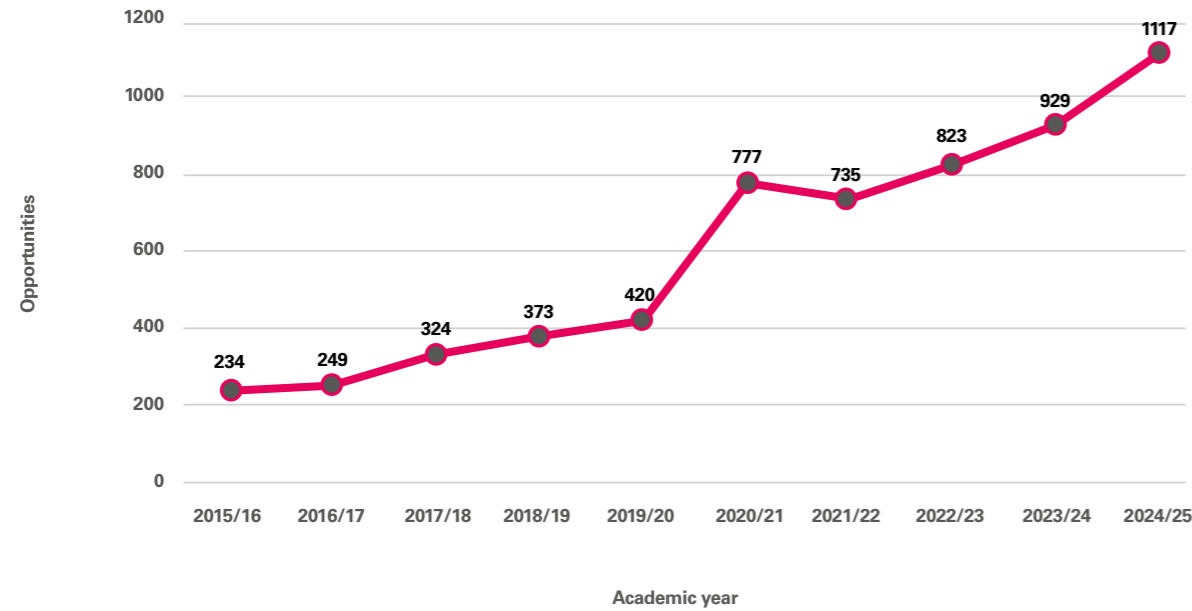
## Cases by area of law (total: 325)



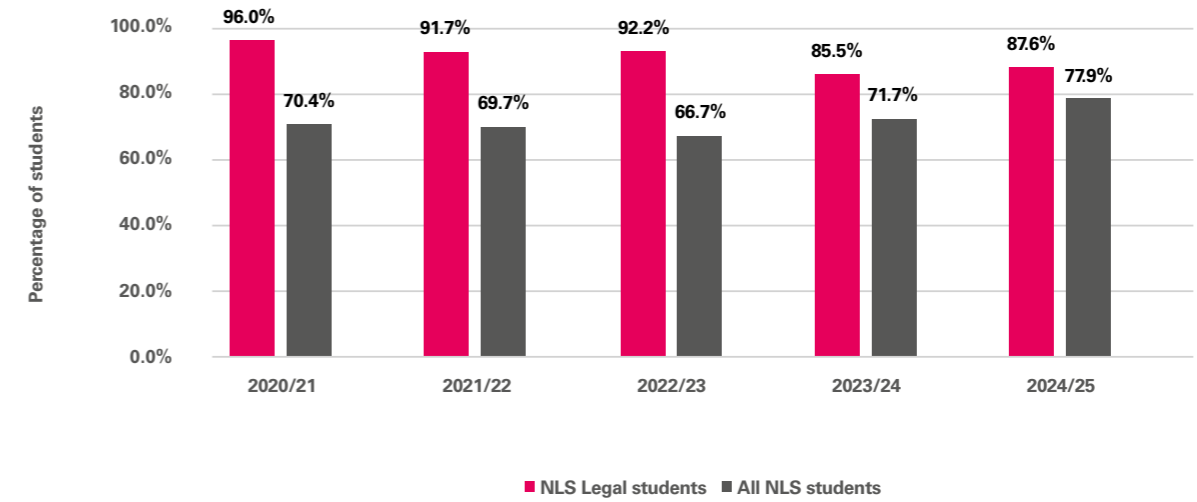
## Financial awards achieved for clients



### NLS Legal student opportunities

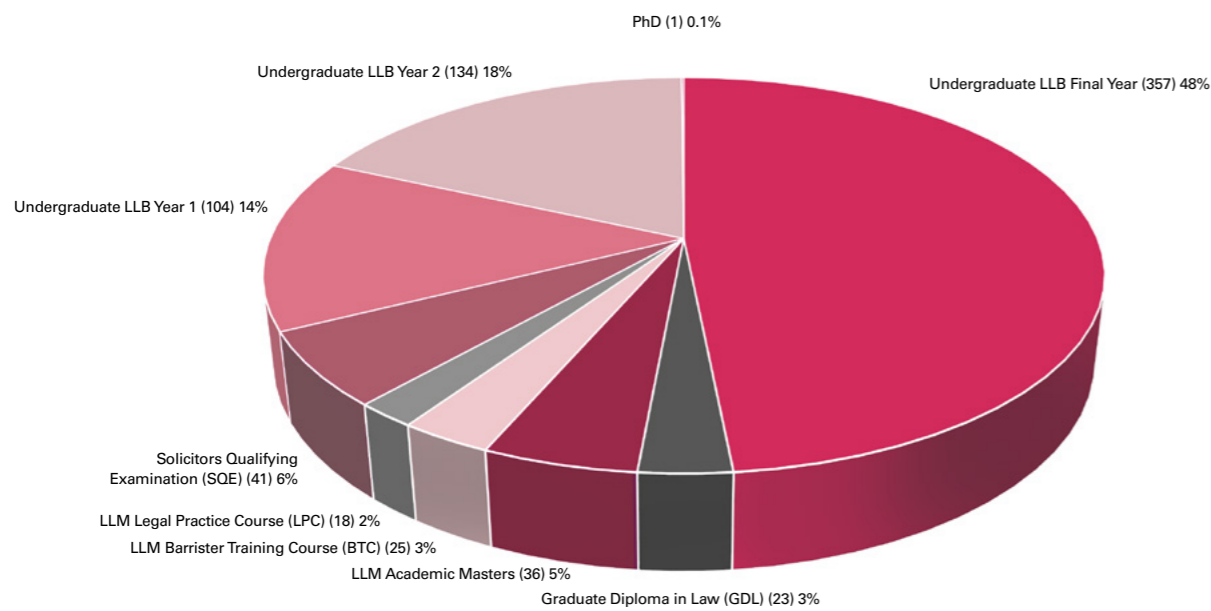


### NLS Legal students achieving a 2:1 or first-class degree, compared with total NLS student population

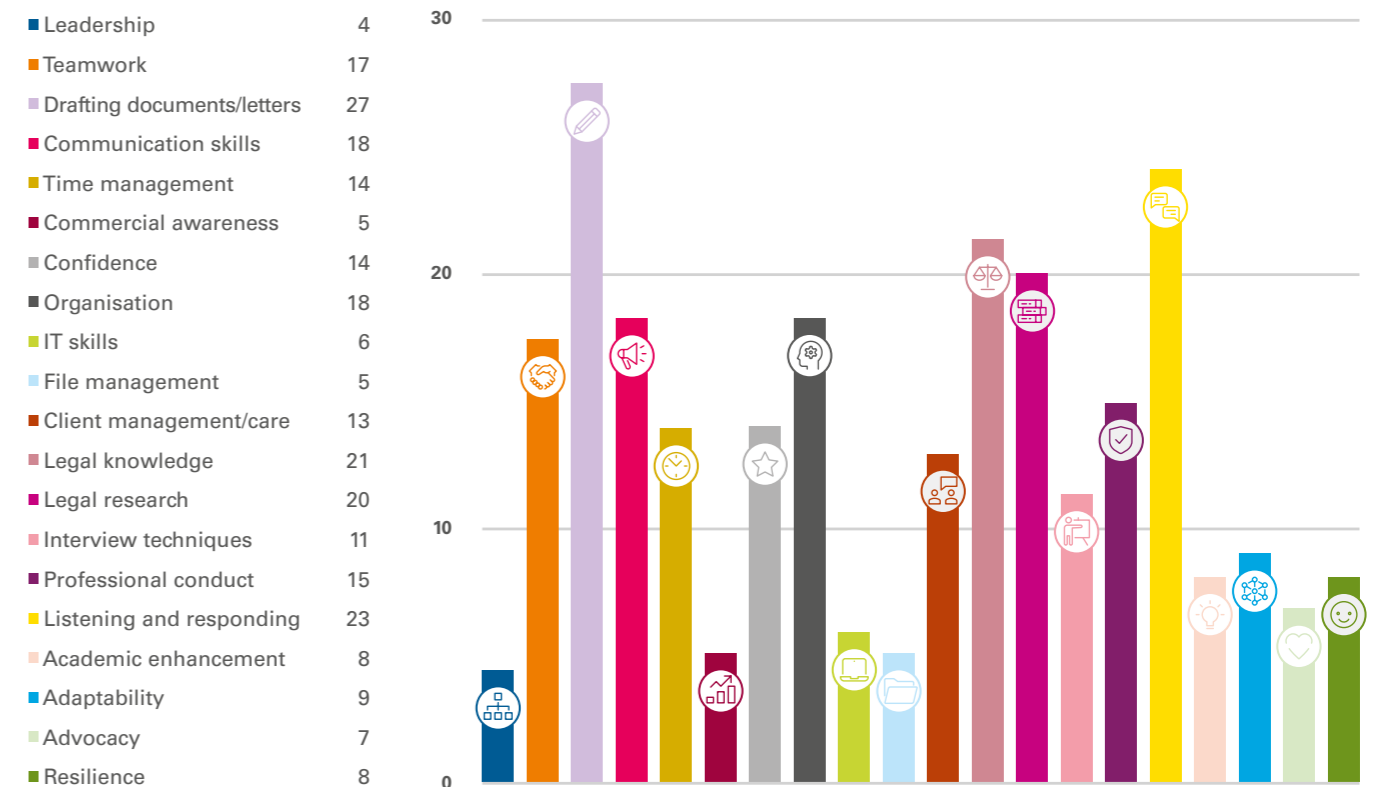


\*Figures based on students working on live client matters

### Students by course: intra and extra-curricular (739 students)



The below graph represents the answers given in our 2024/25 student survey in response to the question: 'What are the most valuable skills that you have gained through volunteering at NLS Legal?'



# Client feedback



All communication was clear, responsive and easy to understand. Initial contact by email offered choice of communication, great for someone like me who doesn't like phone calls. In person meetings prepared me for court. Knowledge of the law from the legal team got an award that I could not have done on my own. I cannot thank you enough.

Reassuring and very valuable advice and support, given in a thoroughly professional but warm and friendly manner by considerate staff and student.

NLS has been nothing short of professional and supportive throughout the entire process. From the very first communication, the team took the time to listen carefully and provided clear guidance as I navigated the legal challenge I was facing.

Thanks to your outstanding work, we achieved a successful outcome, and I was awarded the high rate of PIP that I should have received all along. Winning the case was an incredible relief and a major victory, and I truly could not have done it without your support and expertise. Thank you once again for your compassion, commitment, and tireless effort on my behalf.

Professional,  
attentive,  
courteous,  
responsive.

I just wanted to say a heartfelt thank you for all the time, effort and care you put into helping me with my legal matter. I couldn't have done it without your support and I'll never forget the kindness you shared throughout... Thanks to your dedication, the issue was resolved without going to court, and I'm incredibly grateful for the peace of mind that's brought me.

Excellent communication and advice.

Katie and her students were fantastic, the whole process felt very professional but they put me at ease and answered all my questions fully and thoroughly to ensure I felt confident about their advice and how to proceed going further. I wouldn't hesitate to recommend the service to my friends and family and have already done so!

Your team's advice has given us a level of confidence that we did not have before. So thank you all.

Without the help of NLS Legal, I would not have been able to have my situation resolved. All the hard work that all staff members and student volunteers provide, shines through in their friendliness, dedication & hardworking manner.

Simply outstanding!

# Student feedback

Volunteering at NLS Legal helped me a lot to learn about the legal field and have the best experience.

I would highly recommend it to anybody wanting to apply their knowledge. One has to start from somewhere and as an international student who doesn't have many opportunities to volunteer in the UK, I am grateful for the opportunity NLS legal has provided for me! At first it might seem intimidating but once one conquers their fear and realizes that you can make mistakes and learn upon them the whole volunteering experience in NLS Legal becomes super enjoyable.

It provided me with essential transferable skills for my career and it enhanced my applications for jobs and other opportunities.

Great opportunity to have a hands-on practical experience. Relating academic studies to real life situations helped me solidify who I want to be and what I want to do.

It provided a brilliant opportunity to undertake real life work. All the staff could not have been more helpful when assisting me with the case. My supervisor was so wonderful, and ensured that I felt confident in every task I completed. I never thought I would have an opportunity like this whilst at University, and it has massively increased my confidence when making applications for my future career.

I have had a really positive experience, Megan and Emma were amazing. During the client meeting I felt well supported which gave me the confidence to run the meeting. Additionally, Megan was always available to help with queries and provided useful feedback on my draft of the advice letter.

It was a great overall experience. The team is very kind and helpful. I cannot wait to work again next term.

Volunteering at NLS Legal has been a valuable experience, providing me with the opportunity to apply my legal knowledge in a practical setting while simultaneously supporting access to justice.



## Former Student Volunteer: Lotte Bennett

- LLB Law (Hons) (2019 to 2022):  
Graduated with a 2:2 degree
- LLM Master of Law (General) (2023/24):  
Graduated with a Distinction
- LLM Legal Practice Course (LPC) (2024/25):  
Graduated with a Distinction

As a volunteer at NLS Legal, I led the Outreach Programme and advocated on social security cases. These roles provided hands-on experience in client interviewing, legal research, and drafting letters of legal advice, which has greatly improved my practical skillset. As many of the cases I worked on were sensitive in nature, I was also able to refine essential soft skills such as effective communication, my professional etiquette, and engaging with clients sympathetically. These skills were incredibly helpful during my LPC studies and have laid a strong foundation for my future career as a solicitor.

Volunteering with NLS Legal has given me a great appreciation for pro bono work and the vital role it plays in ensuring people have access to justice. It was a privilege to witness first-hand how providing legal advice can make a meaningful and positive impact on people's lives.

It has also been a privilege to work with experienced legal professionals who are committed to helping students and so invested in their progress. Throughout my time volunteering, I felt fully supported by my supervisors, and their confidence in me made NLS Legal a wonderful environment to learn and improve.

I am thrilled to have recently accepted a Training Contract with Shoosmiths. My volunteer work with NLS Legal was instrumental in this recent achievement. Not only did it give me the confidence and skills necessary to secure such an offer, but the environment at NLS Legal has shown me the culture and values I would like to prioritise during my career.

# Our intra- curricular activity

As part of our commitment to integrating practical skills and work experience into a student's academic course, we offer numerous intra-curricular options, over and above extra-curricular opportunities.

This aligns with the NLS ethos to embed practical skills within every stage of the curriculum and in recognition of how experiential learning improves degree results and increases employability. This year, a total of 379 students took part in NLS Legal activity for academic credit. For the activity detailed below, save for Employer Challenges, the students will prepare a report, reflecting on the knowledge and skills developed as part of their practical experience, which is then assessed and forms part of their grade. This helps our students develop as reflective professionals.

We detail in this section our diverse variety of intra-curricular activity.

## Placement students

Each year, we offer a 10-12 month placement to one of our NLS students, allowing them to complete their third year with us on placement as part of their LLB Law (Sandwich) degree. Our placement student undertakes the role of Legal Assistant, completing a mix of legal work and administrative duties to support the firm.

Our 2024/25 placement student was Mishal Naeem. Mishal provided a significant contribution to the firm, supporting numerous service areas and activity – she was even involved in the recruitment of the new NTU Vice-Chancellor, Professor Dave Petley, as part of the student interviewing panel. Mishal was a pleasure to work with and it was great to see her grow in confidence and develop throughout the year. We wish Mishal all the best for her future studies and career, we have no doubt that her work ethic, ambition and tenacity will stand her in excellent stead for future success. Please do read on to hear first-hand about Mishal's experience:



### Mishal Naeem, NLS Legal Placement Student (September 2024 – July 2025)

My placement year at NLS Legal was a transformative experience that contributed significantly to my professional and personal growth. I had the chance to work across a range of practice areas, including Employment Law, Intellectual Property, and Welfare Benefits, which greatly enhanced my adaptability and ability to collaborate with diverse teams.

Throughout my placement, I primarily supported my supervisor within the Employment Law Service, where I took on a variety of responsibilities. These included managing new enquiries, scheduling client meetings, and participating in casework activities. I managed the setup of client files on the digital case management system, helped prepare court bundles, and assisted in drafting various court documents. I also attended client interviews, drafted attendance notes, conducted legal research, and had the opportunity to shadow in Employment Tribunal hearings. One of the most rewarding aspects was taking the lead on client interviews, where I conducted research on areas like TUPE to draft advice letters. This experience not only helped develop my research and client interview skills but also boosted my confidence. Drafting advice letters further refined my abilities to write concisely with clarity.

One of the pivotal moments of my placement was working on a complex welfare benefits case, from the initial client interview to representing the client at the First Tier Social Security Tribunal.

Successfully securing a £24,000 award in benefits for my client was both rewarding and fulfilling, especially considering my initial nerves and self-doubt. This experience highlighted the power of legal representation, particularly for clients who are otherwise unable to afford it.

Working in a collaborative and open-plan environment helped me build strong relationships within the team. I found the support and mentorship from the Employment team especially impactful, as they encouraged me to step outside my comfort zone and continuously learn. Their guidance not only expanded my understanding of the services offered but also deepened my appreciation for the legal profession as a whole.

Overall, my time at NLS Legal was an amazing experience that solidified my determination to pursue a career as a solicitor. The skills, confidence, and professional relationships I gained have been invaluable in shaping my future aspirations to qualify as a solicitor.

In July 2025, we welcomed our 2025/26 placement student, Kareem Al-Dairi. Kareem was able to commence his placement two months earlier than usual, thanks to the Hunter donation funding. Read more about his experience at page 7.

## Applied Legal Knowledge (Criminal and Business Practice)

Applied Legal Knowledge is a third-year module with a practical focus and includes an NLS Legal element. This year, the module enabled 280 students the opportunity to work on cases that NLS Legal has dealt with (albeit with any identifying features redacted and certain facts changed to protect client confidentiality). It is designed as a mini work experience and provides students with insight into how to put theory into practice and provides the chance to develop their employability skills by undertaking tasks such as drafting a letter of advice to a client.

The business task focused on insolvency and the criminal task involved advising a client on the Victims' Right to Review Scheme. Students work in groups to undertake the tasks set and are given personalised feedback by our lawyers on their work. They also reflect on their experience within group sessions and in their end of module reflective report, encouraging our students to develop a reflective and growth mindset.

### Law in Practice

Five students completed their placement with NLS Legal, as part of their Law in Practice final year LLB module. The students worked on family law, employment law, civil litigation and social justice matters, undertaking a minimum of 35 hours work experience for academic credit.

### Employer Challenges

A total of 94 students completed Employer Challenges with NLS Legal (78 undergraduates and 16 postgraduates). The challenges involve the students working in groups to give presentations to our supervising lawyers on topics such how Artificial Intelligence (AI) could benefit our firm, how the firm can develop its services to further help address unmet legal need in the local community, and how our firm can develop projects and/or its services to increase diversity in the legal profession.

The module enabled 280 students the opportunity to work on cases that NLS Legal has dealt with.

# Other services and projects 2024/25

## Community Outreach Advice Services

For a number of years now, we have been holding outreach advice services at both the Nottingham Women's Centre and St George's Community Centre in Netherfield. This is a student-led project and provides clients with one-off advice or, in cases involving areas of law outside of our service areas, signposting to other organisations and useful resources. The outreach sessions run fortnightly throughout October to March. This year, our two student project leaders, supported by a further 12 students, assisted 21 individuals as part of these services, providing supervised advice and assistance across a large range of areas including family, employment and housing.

In addition, this year we expanded our outreach advice service by delivering a session at the library in Clifton, as part of the wider NTU work in the area. We also provided bespoke IP and business focused advice in collaboration with our colleagues at the NTU Dryden Enterprise Centre.

## Administration and Compliance Support placements

Our Administration and Compliance Support placements are an excellent opportunity for our students to become involved in the work of NLS Legal and gain confidence, with some of the placements being ring-fenced for our first-year students. This academic year, 19 students worked with us in this capacity. This initiative allows the students to learn first-hand how a law firm works, gaining invaluable skills for their future degree and career. The students involved undertook administrative tasks, such as reception duty and dealing with new enquiries, as well as supporting us with risk and compliance projects, by undertaking file reviews, raising awareness of our regulatory obligations and best practice. We find this is a fantastic way to start volunteering in NLS Legal.

To be a volunteer with NLS Legal's New Enquiries and Admin Team was an opportunity that gave me an insight into the administrative side of a law firm. I learned how to log new enquiries, greet clients who had appointments and to issue signposting to enquirers who could not be assisted. It was an incredible experience, one that I enjoyed immensely and would recommend to other students.

Student feedback

This initiative is made all the more valuable to students in view of the experience they gain with **Clio**, our case management system. Clio kindly donates their **case management system** to us for free to support our work.

## Santander funded placements for students of Black heritage

Thanks to generous funding from **Santander Universities UK**, and following a successful launch in 2022/23, we were once again able to offer funded work experience placements to law students on the NTU Black Leadership Programme, as well as other students of Black heritage via their involvement in various employability initiatives. A total of nine students undertook a minimum of 35 hours work experience and were involved in a range of activity within the firm, supporting our team of lawyers with case work and with public legal education initiatives. We are hugely grateful to Santander for enabling us to offer such outstanding opportunities to our students.

## International Partnerships

NLS is proud to partner with other institutions from across the globe. Through these partnerships, students visit NLS as part of their degree transfer programme. During their time at NLS, students from our international partnership institutions join us in NLS Legal to gain some practical experience and insight into the legal system of England and Wales. This year, 12 students from University of London in Bangladesh, Brickfields Asia College, Malaysia and Advance Tertiary College, Malaysia spent three days with us undertaking tasks such as attending client meetings, conducting legal research and drafting attendance notes.

## CPS Student Scrutiny Panel

16 of our students took part in a Crown Prosecution Service (CPS) Scrutiny Panel. This initiative provided our students with an insight into the work of the CPS. The students analysed a sexual offences case study and provided feedback to the CPS solicitor facilitating the session. As well as the value provided to our students, this project enables the CPS to embed community engagement activity and supports improvements in casework quality, public confidence and the diversity of its workforce. A huge thanks to all the CPS staff involved.

NLS is proud to partner with other institutions from across the globe.

## Policy Reform – Environmental Law Foundation Policy Clinic

Over the course of 2024/25 we were delighted to again support the work of the Environmental Law Foundation by running a policy clinic in collaboration with them. Solicitor, Charis Wong, supervised the work of the policy clinic, supported by paralegals James Sinclair and Matilda Kapala. 11 students assisted with the clinic.

The project required the application of complex laws and substantial desktop research was undertaken. It provided the opportunity for students interested in environmental law to obtain a detailed understanding of environmental law issues and allowed them to develop their skills as future legal practitioners in a policy context. Our findings were provided to the Environmental Law Foundation to support them in their ongoing work.

## Virtual Internships

Having introduced virtual internships as a response to the Covid pandemic, we continue to offer these to support more students to gain legal work experience. This year, we offered a family law virtual internship to all students completing the SQE 1 and SQE 2 courses, to help them develop their practical skills ahead of sitting their SQE 2 assessments.

## Student Pro Bono Committee

Our Student Pro Bono Committee (SPBC) comprises students who provide a significant contribution to NLS Legal. The SPBC help us develop the firm, improve our service for both clients and students, raise awareness of pro bono and access to justice, support other student volunteers, and promote the firm during Open Days and other events. In addition, they participated in the Law School Challenge to raise funds for two pro bono charities, Advocate and LawWorks. Their efforts earned them the Bronze Award and the Midway Prize, giving the team the opportunity to connect with legal professionals through virtual speed networking. In total, all universities taking part in the challenge raised £18,200 for access to justice organisations. See page 30 for details of the SPBC members.

## Lead Volunteers

Each year, we recognise NLS student volunteers who have gone above and beyond in their commitment to NLS Legal. These exceptional individuals are invited to become Lead Volunteers - a role that acknowledges their outstanding contributions and positions them as role models for their peers. This year, we appointed 17 students as Lead Volunteers. Their dedication and hard work have been instrumental in supporting our services and inspiring others to engage meaningfully with pro bono work. See page 30 for details of our Lead Volunteers.

## LawWorks

We are a member of the LawWorks network and continue our close collaboration with them. LawWorks is a charity operating in England and Wales that connects people who cannot afford legal advice or access legal aid with the organisations that can assist them. We are a member of the LawWorks East Midlands Hub, meeting with other local pro bono providers to share experiences and best practice, update each other on our services and other activities, and facilitate signposting in order to make sure our work reaches as many individuals in need as possible. We once again supported LawWorks by submitting statistics for their annual report. Special thanks go to our East Midlands Clinics Support & Development Officer, Anne-Marie Dhillon, for her unwavering support.

## Pathways to Law

We were once 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. As part of the law school's Pathways to Law activity, we hosted an online interactive client interviewing session, providing 30 Pathways students with an insight into communication skills needed in order to represent clients effectively. The feedback from the students was extremely positive with a 100% of the students confirming that the session was useful and informative and 100% confirming that the event strengthened their understanding of jobs in the legal sector.

**"It was super informative. I really like how each pathway was broken down and how also discussed skills we need. I also liked the tips of getting a weekend job to develop transferable skills."**

Student feedback



# Awards and recognition

## Nottinghamshire Law Society Awards 2025

Our Housing and Welfare Benefits Supervisor, Emma McGowan, won the Community Champion Award at the Nottinghamshire Law Society Awards 2025.

We were extremely proud of Emma for achieving this well-deserved award, received in recognition of her significant contribution to the greater community via her pro-bono work and support to community projects. Emma has worked tirelessly as a social welfare lawyer for over a decade and gives a voice to some of the most marginalised in society.

In addition, our Trainee Solicitor, **Megan Russell**, was **shortlisted** in the **Junior Lawyer of the Year** category.

A wonderful evening to celebrate the achievements of our fantastic colleagues.

You can read Emma's post award interview here: [An Interview with Community Champion of the Year - Emma McGowan - Nottingham-Law-Society](#)



## The 2025 Pro Bono Recognition List of England & Wales

We were delighted that all five of our solicitors – **Laura Pinkney, Mathew Game, Katie Smith, Charis Wong and Megan Shirley** - were once again included on the Pro Bono Recognition List of England & Wales. The List recognises barristers and solicitors who gave 25 hours or more pro bono legal assistance over the last year. The initiative is endorsed by its Patron, the Lady Chief Justice of England and Wales, The Baroness Carr of Walton-on-the-Hill, the Law Society, the Bar Council and all the major pro bono organisations under the aegis of the Attorney General's Pro Bono Committee.



## NLS Prizes

The following students were also recognised for their contribution to NLS Legal via the NLS Annual Prizes for 24/25 and we thank them for their incredible commitment and achievements:

The NLS Dean's Award for Outstanding Achievement: **Aleksandra Szostak**

The NLS Dean's Award for Outstanding Contribution:

**Lotte Bennett** and **Rumbidzai Mavera**

The NLS Dean's Award for Contribution to the Community: **Harry Barnett**

NLS Richard Bagley Award for Outstanding Contribution o Pro Bono:

**Aisha Rehman** and **Astrid Pham**

At the Legal Services Board (LSB) conference, Laura Pinkney shared her experience of running a university owned regulated law firm.

## Conferences

### Legal Services Board (LSB) Reshaping Legal Services Conference

In March 2025, Head of NLS Legal, Laura Pinkney was a speaker at this Legal Services Board (LSB) conference, where she shared her experience of running a university owned regulated law firm in a session entitled Community collaboration to improve access to justice: What can we learn and what's holding others back? The session was Chaired by David Abbott, LSB Consumer Panel Member and CEO of the Free Representation Unit. Laura was joined on the expert panel by Emma Bates, Director on Positive Action on Poverty at Central England Law Centre; Dan Hopewell, Director of Knowledge and Innovation at Bromley by Bow Health Partnership and Dr Sarah Nason, Senior Lecturer at Bangor University. Delegates included regulators, legal professionals and legal academics amongst other stakeholders.



### Law Central Applications Board (LawCAB): Bi-annual Legal Education Conference: Supporting aspiring lawyers from learning to practice

In July, Head of NLS Legal, Laura Pinkney was a guest panellist at this conference, speaking as part of the session entitled Getting a foot on the ladder – the role of work experience session. The session was Chaired by Alison Hook, Director at Hook Tangaza and Laura was joined on the panel by John Cuss, Legal Services Director at Hudgell Solicitors and Bandy Karki, Early Talent Lead at the Government Legal Department. The discussion focused on how each of the panellists were promoting and facilitating work experience via their organisations and the benefits of work experience from the perspective of both the candidate and the organisation. Delegates included legal education and training providers, legal professionals and law students.



# 2024/25 NLS Legal team

## 2024/25 NLS Legal team Top to bottom (left to right):

**Jenny Chapman** (NLS Executive Dean and NLS Legal Compliance Officer for Legal Practice)

**Laura Pinkney** (Head of NLS Legal, Solicitor)

**Mathew Game** (Employment Solicitor)

**Jane Jarman** (NLS Professor, Solicitor and NLS Legal Training Principal)

**Katie Smith** (Family Solicitor)

**Peter Vaughan** (NLS Associate Professor and Trade Mark Attorney)

**Charis Wong** (Business and Civil Litigation Solicitor)

**Emma McGowan** (Housing and Welfare Benefits Supervisor)

**Carlota Gonzalez Laynez** (Head of NLS Operations)

**Melissa Bailey** (Administrator)

**Megan Russell** (Trainee Solicitor)

**Rachel Williams** (Trainee Solicitor)

**James Sinclair** (Paralegal)

**Matilda Kapala** (Paralegal)

**Phoebe Colton** (Legal Assistant)

**Sanija Stopina** (Legal Assistant)

**Mishal Naeem** (Legal Assistant – Placement Student)

**Kareem Al-Dairi** (Legal Assistant – Placement Student)

**Megan Shirley** (NLS Senior Lecturer, Solicitor)

## Support from the wider NLS and NTU community

We are extremely grateful to our many other NLS and NTU colleagues, both academic and professional services, who support NLS Legal in a variety of ways.

## Our 2024/25 Student Pro Bono Committee:

**Harry Toy** (Chair)

**Kyo Munir** (Vice Chair)

**Halima Akram** (Social Media Officer)

**Alisha Rehman** (Events Officer)

**Tyla Dean** (Events Officer)

**Molly Lofts** (Fundraising Officer)

**Kelsey Pearce** (Fundraising Officer)

**Mishal Naeem** (NLS Legal Representative)

**Harriet Owusu Afriyie** (Support Through Court Representative)

## Our 2024/25 Lead Volunteers:

**Aleksandra Szostak**

**Angela Carey**

**Angelina Vago Ancarola**

**Darion Smalls**

**Harry Toy**

**Jackie Buick**

**James Spencer**

**Kareem Al-Dairi**

**Kyo Munir**

**Lily Cotton**

**Lotte Bennett**

**Lucia Sorhaindo-Saunders Sorhaindo**

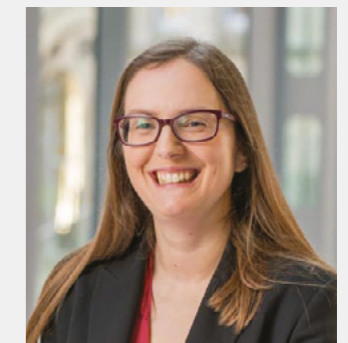
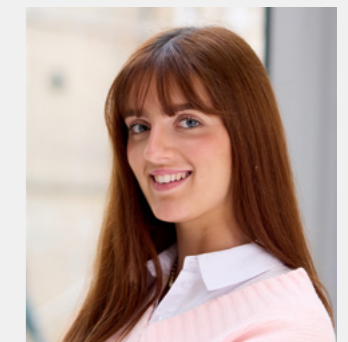
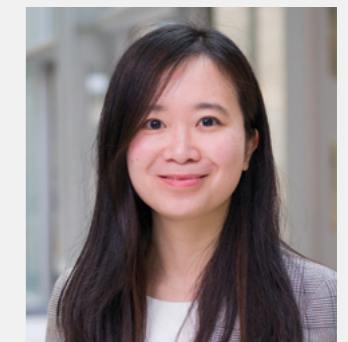
**Manayka Walia**

**Maya Devalia**

**Princy Brar**

**Sophie Preisler**

**Su-Jin Yang**





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nls\_ntu



nottingham-law-school

NLS Legal, Chaucer Building,  
Goldsmith Street,  
Nottingham NG1 5LP

**Tel** +44 (0)115 848 4262

**Email** [nlslegal@ntu.ac.uk](mailto:nlslegal@ntu.ac.uk)

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

