



# NLS Legal Annual Report 2022/23



**NLS Legal**  
Nottingham Law School



**Law Firm of the Year**  
**LexisNexis**  
Legal Awards 2022



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# 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 is one of the leading providers of academic and professional legal education with an outstanding reputation in the delivery of innovative courses. NLS is 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 – NLS Legal (formerly the NLS Legal Advice Centre) in 2015 as a major milestone in the development of the NLS’s pro bono advice clinic, which was first established in 2002.

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 model has parallels to the teaching hospital model traditionally seen in the medicine discipline context providing 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 in the UK when it became regulated in 2015 and such a model remains rare in the higher education sector.

Legal advice, assistance and representation is provided on a not-for-profit 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 based within Chaucer Building, City Centre campus, providing a professional and confidential space for clients, staff and students. The firm operates both in person and remotely. The current facilities were officially opened in 2014 by Dominic Grieve QC, MP (then Attorney General).

NLS Legal is multi award winning, and its achievements include being named ‘Law Firm of the Year’ at the national LexisNexis Legal Awards 2022.

Please note – The information and data within this report cover the period 1 September 2022 to 31 August 2023.





# Executive summary

## Welcome to our Annual Report 2022/23 – it has been a very busy and eventful year!

It has been a real pleasure to grow the team this year. In September 2022 we welcomed a new solicitor, four new paralegals and a new legal assistant, alongside our new placement student. Many of the new team members are current or former students, which adds to our shared vision and values, and strengthens that all important sense of belonging and community, which we share with our students. Expanding the team has enabled us to deal with more cases and offer more student opportunities than ever before, and I am incredibly proud of how hard the team work to support both our clients and our students. This investment by the law school embodies NTU's commitment to enrich society, create opportunity and ensure our students are developing key employability skills, enabling them to grow on a professional and personal level, whilst providing a vital service for the community.

Our work attracted international recognition when we received runner-up in the 'Legal Innovation' category at the **international Clio Reisman Awards 2023**. In addition, several members of the team won awards for their individual achievements, which included a double win at Nottinghamshire Law Society's Annual Awards 2023 with our Family Solicitor, **Katie Smith**, winning 'Solicitor of the Year'

and our Practice Manager, **Carlota Gonzalez Laynez**, winning 'Business Support Champion'. **Katie** also received the **NTU Vice-Chancellor's Award for Excellence in Professional Services** and **Peter Vaughan** received the **NTU Vice-Chancellor's Award for Excellence in Teaching and Practice**. We were also delighted to achieve second place at the prestigious **Higher Education Innovate Awards 2022** in the 'most innovative approach to developing employability skills' category. These were such proud moments for the team to celebrate together and to see the hard work of colleagues recognised and rewarded.

One of our key developments this year, thanks to funding provided by **Santander Universities UK**, was the launch of **paid placement opportunities** to students on the **NTU Black Leadership Programme** (read more at page 24). Due to the success of this initiative, and our ongoing commitment to equality, diversity, and inclusion, it is our aim to offer more funded opportunities to our students in the future. This is particularly pertinent as the cost-of-living crisis continues to bite, with many of our students needing to undertake increasing amounts of part time work alongside their studies. Whilst embedding work experience within courses is one way we are addressing this at NTU, I would welcome conversations

with any organisations interested in supporting us to provide our students with equity of opportunity via our paid placement scheme.

I take this opportunity to thank NTU for their continued unwavering support and commitment. In particular, I would like to thank **Jenny Chapman, Executive Dean** of NLS, the **Board of Governors**, the **Vice Chancellor, Professor Edward Peck CBE**, the **University Executive Team** and the NLS Legal's **Board of Directors and ABS Management Board**.

I do hope you enjoy reading the report.

**Laura Pinkney, Head of NLS Legal**



# Funding and governance

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 and funding is also received from private donors and commercial organisations.

As acknowledged above, NLS Legal would not exist without the innovative vision and the generous financial assistance provided by NTU. In particular, we would like to thank NTU's **Board of Governors**, the **Vice Chancellor Professor Edward Peck CBE** and the **University Executive Team** for their commitment and unwavering support to NLS Legal.

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

A massive thank you to **Clio** who generously provides us with free access to their case management software in order to support the smooth running of our pro bono service. The opportunity to gain experience of using a case management system is also of huge value to our students (read more at page 23).

Sincere thanks to **Santander Universities UK** who have continued to provide vital funding to support our service. This year we utilised the funding to provide five of our students undertaking the NTU Black Leadership Programme with a two-week paid work experience placement. We are grateful to Santander for enabling us to provide transformative opportunities to our students (read more about this initiative at page 24).

Thank you also to other individuals who have made donations to support our continued work – your kindness and generosity is immensely valued.

In addition, we are grateful to the numerous firms, 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                          | – LawWorks   |
| – Bipolar Lift                              | – NBV Enterprise Solutions Ltd                         |
| – Business and Intellectual Property Centre | – Nottingham Central Library                           |
| – Citizen's Advice Nottingham and District  | – Nottingham County Council – Benefits Team and i-work |
| – Citizen's Advice Broxtowe                 | – Nottingham Law Centre                                |
| – Clio                                      | – Nottinghamshire Law Society                          |
| – Derbyshire Law Centre                     | – Nottingham Women's Centre                            |
| – Environmental Law Foundation              | – Ropewalk Chambers                                    |
| – Free Representation Unit                  | – St George's Community Centre, Netherfield            |
| – Hate Crime Unit                           | – Support Through Court                                |
| – Hodge Jones and Allen                     | – The ARK Gedling                                      |
| – Improving Lives                           |  |
| – Jonathan's Voice                          |  |

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.

Thank you also to our Board of Directors and ABS Management Board for NLS Legal:

**Professor Cillian Ryan**, Pro Vice-Chancellor International  
**James Lacey**, NTU Director of Finance

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

**Joanne Cenic**, Finance Business Partner and NLS Legal's Compliance Officer for Finance and Administration

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

**Laura Pinkney**, Head of NLS Legal

# Data summary

Due to the expansion of the team this year, we are delighted to have been able to deal with a record number of cases and offer a record number of student opportunities.

We dealt with 362 cases this year, across nine different service areas, a huge 82% growth from 2021/22, with significant increases across all of our practice areas. We were delighted to secure over **£350,000** in compensation, settlements and benefits for our clients this year, bringing our cumulative total to date to an impressive **£6.2million**. Our increased resource and capacity meant we were able to accept approximately 24% of enquiries, compared with a 12% acceptance rate in 21/22. Whilst we are unable to accept the majority of enquiries that we receive – due to the sheer demand for free legal advice – we do provide signposting information to all of those we cannot assist, providing a personalised response wherever possible.

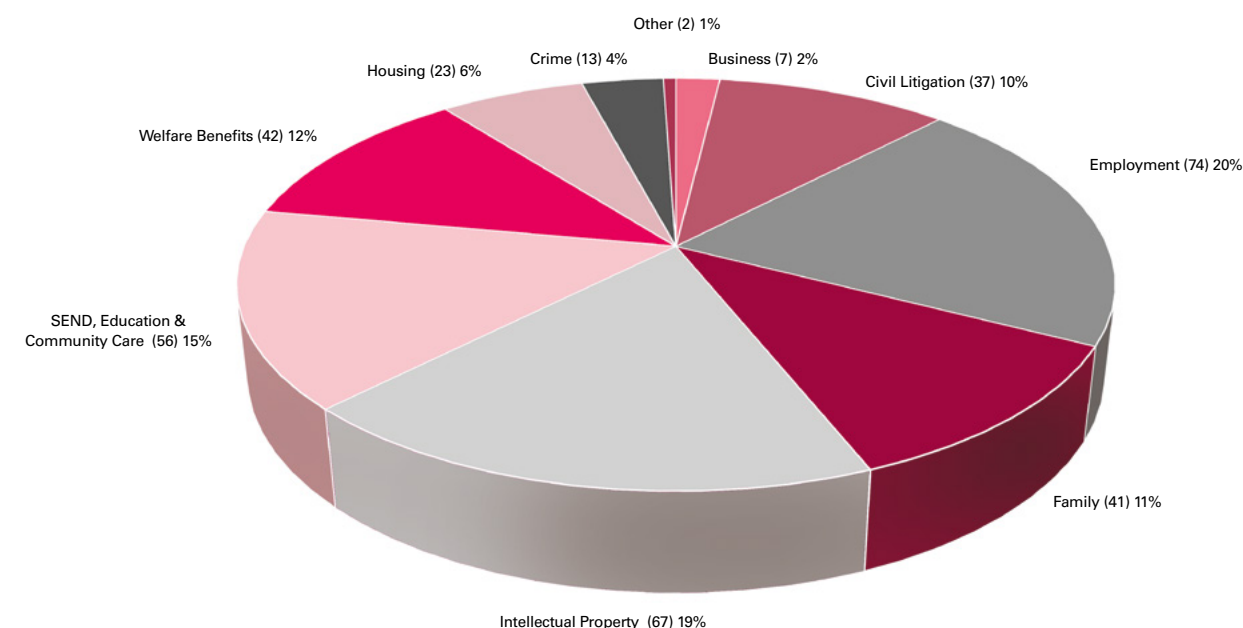
We offered a total of 823 student opportunities this year, compared with 735 in 21/22, representing an increase of 12%. We also increased the number of individual students that we worked with – 636 students, compared with 619 students last year, an increase of 2%. It is worth noting that the number of opportunities exceed the number of students as some students were able to take up multiple opportunities, working across different projects or services. We continue to increase the number of opportunities that our students can use for academic credit (see graph at page 10). This year, 489 students were involved in NLS Legal as part of a course or module, a 10% increase from last year. At NLS, embedding work experience and practical skills development into the curriculum is a priority focus as we know it helps produce well rounded graduates with increased employability skills. In addition, it helps to address equity of opportunity. Work experience opportunities should not just be for those who have the contacts and/or who can afford to take up extra-curricular volunteer opportunities.

We were delighted to see that, once again, those students undertaking live client activity with NLS Legal outperformed their peers, with an incredible 92% achieving a first or 2:1 in their degree, compared with 66% of all NLS students. As you can see from the graph at page 11, this is a consistent trend.

The graphs at pages 12 and 13 contain our Success for All student groups. Success for All is a strategy within educational institutions to improve diversity and close attainment gaps between groups that often face additional barriers. As can be seen from those graphs, NLS is proud to have a very diverse student base and we are proud of the work we do within NLS and NLS Legal to support Success for All initiatives. In terms of our undergraduate profile, the percentage of each of our Success for All category of students engaging in NLS Legal broadly correlate with the percentages for the NLS student cohort as a whole. We were particularly pleased to see that our intra-curricular activity has led to an increased number of BTEC (Business and Technology Education Council) entrant students engaging in NLS Legal activity. In relation to our postgraduate profile, with the exception of Widening Participation (WP) students – students with a home postcode that falls within the Index of Multiple Deprivation quintile 1 or 2 – all other categories of students were over-represented within NLS Legal, which is positive in terms of work in this area.

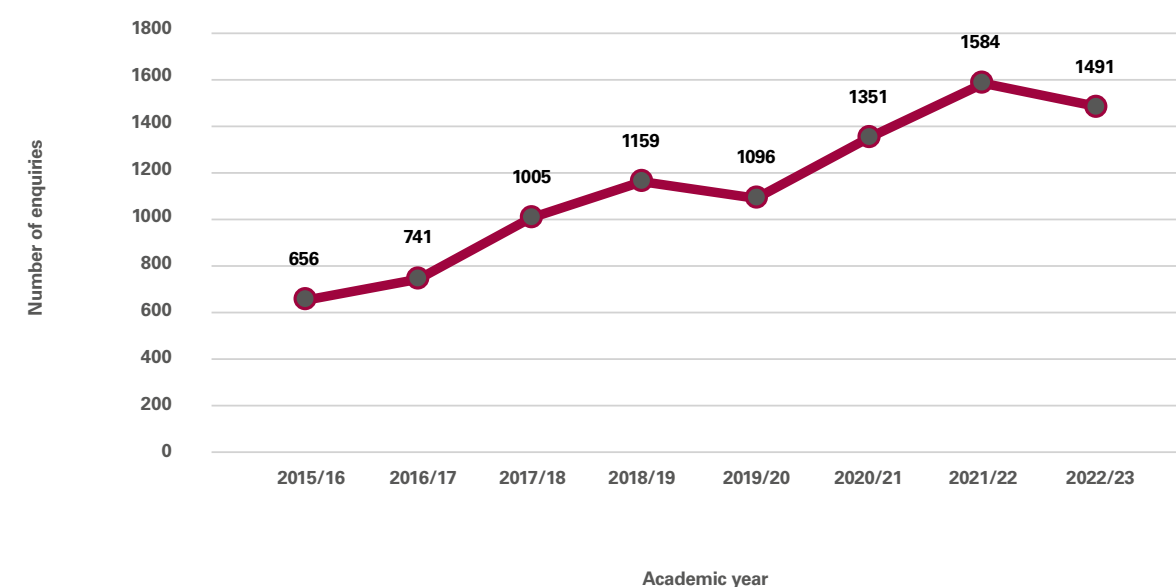
One of the most motivating parts of our job is receiving positive feedback. In addition to the client and student feedback featured at pages 36 to 39, we are proud to report that, based on our student feedback survey data, 100% of our students said they would recommend volunteering at NLS Legal to future students. In addition, 100% of the students that responded said they would be putting their role as student volunteers on their CV or LinkedIn profiles, demonstrating the importance of the role of NLS Legal in enhancing our students' employability. Based on our client feedback survey data, 96% of the clients who completed our client survey said our service was 'excellent' (88 of the 96%) or 'good' and 96% stated that they 'would recommend our services' and 'would use our services again'. In addition, the graph at page 11 highlights the impressive number of key employability skills developed by our students.

## Cases by area of law (total: 362)

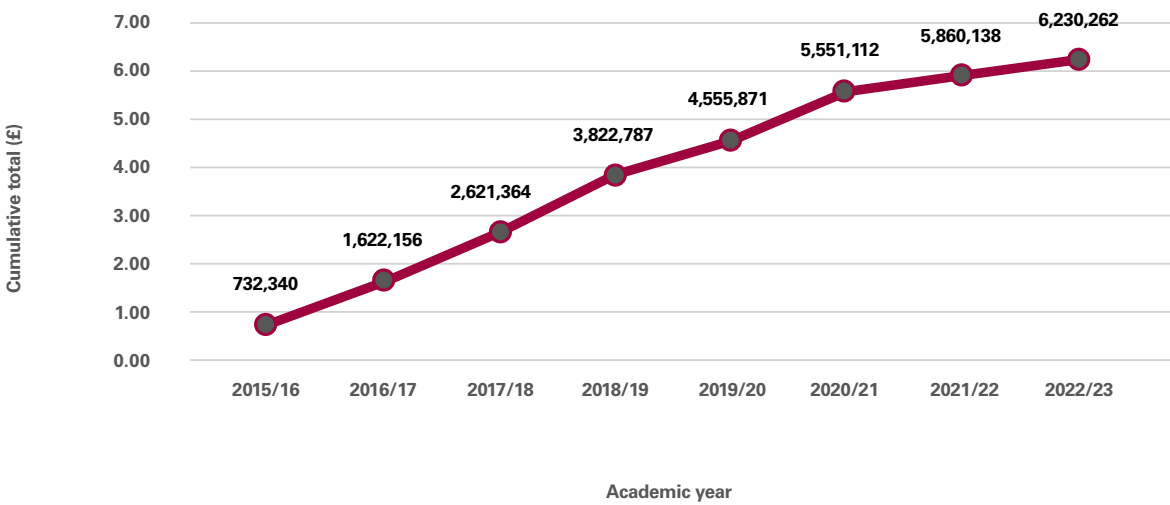


\*Our Trade Mark Attorney also delivered two one-off advice sessions as part of his voluntary work for the Chartered Institute of Trade Mark Attorneys (CITMA).

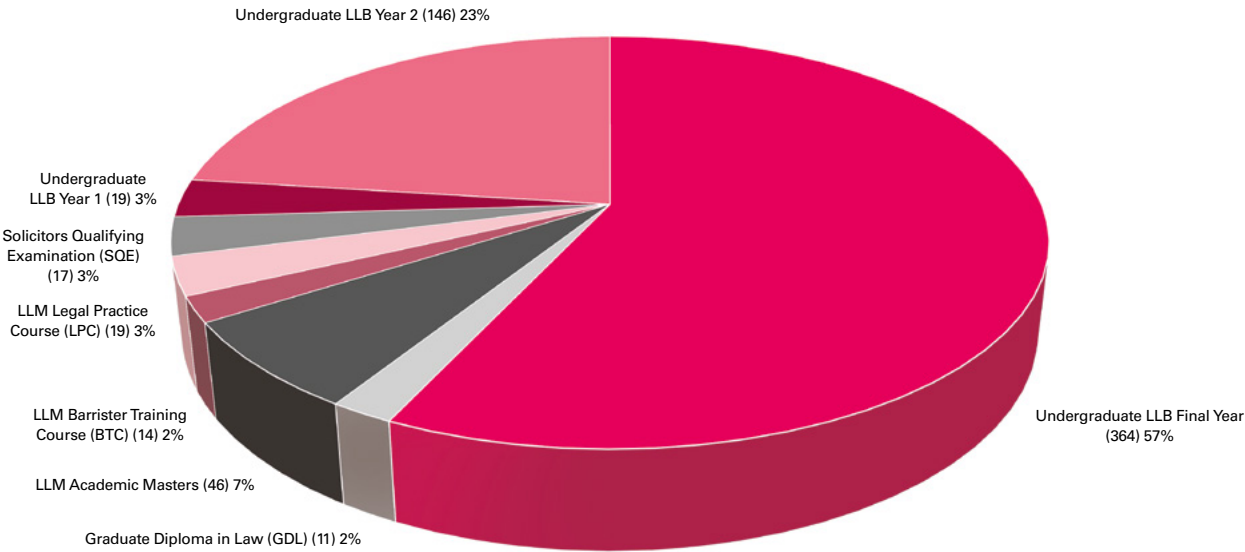
## Total number of enquiries received



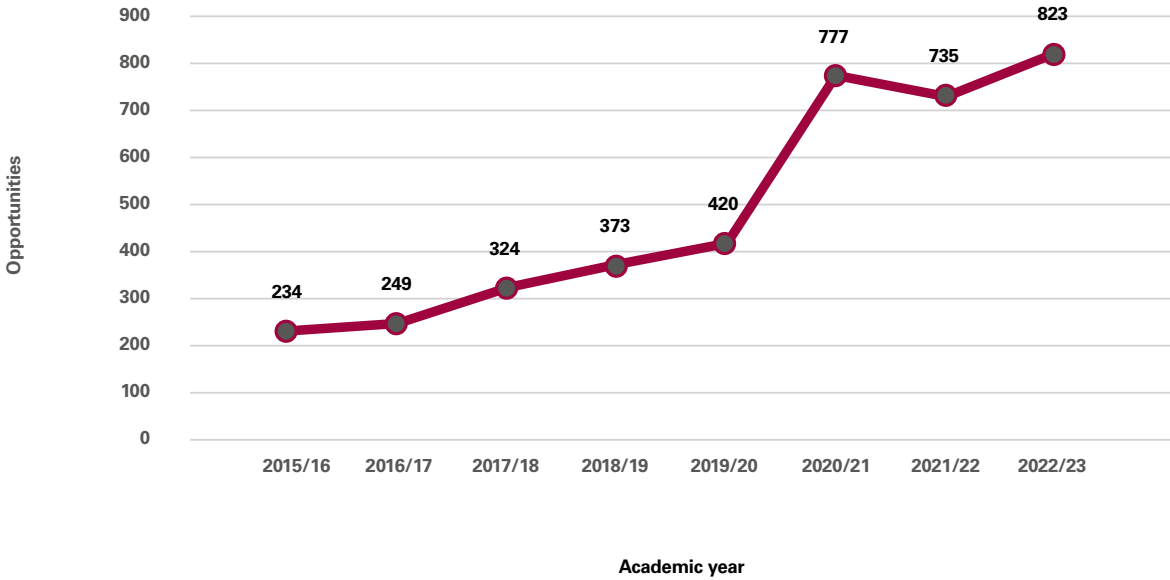
Financial awards achieved for clients



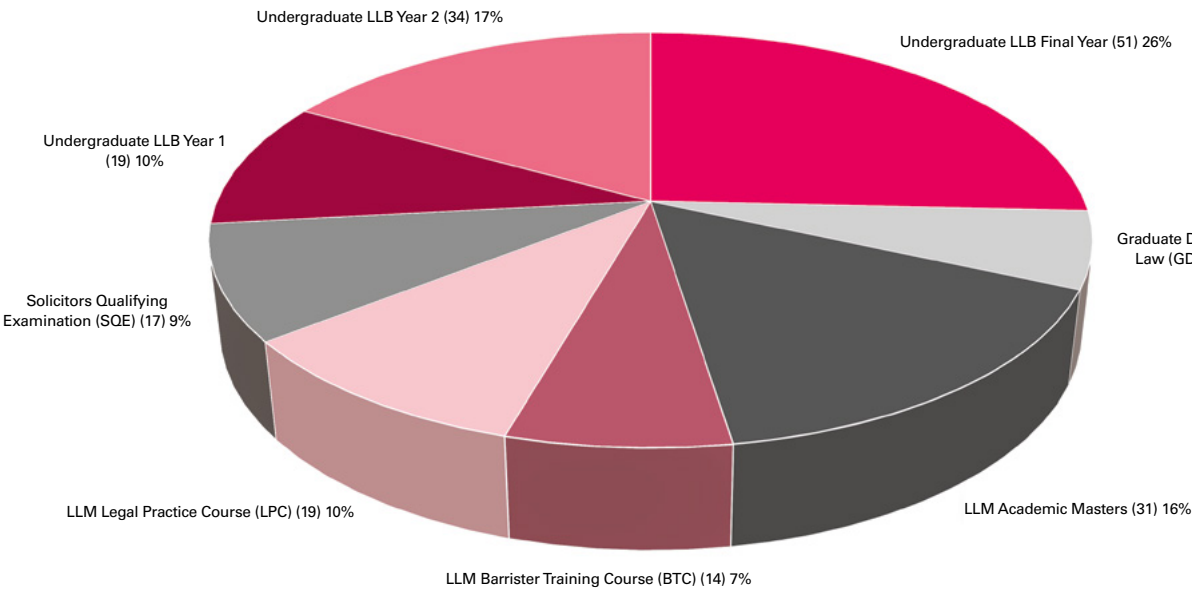
Students by course: intra and extra-curricular (636 students)



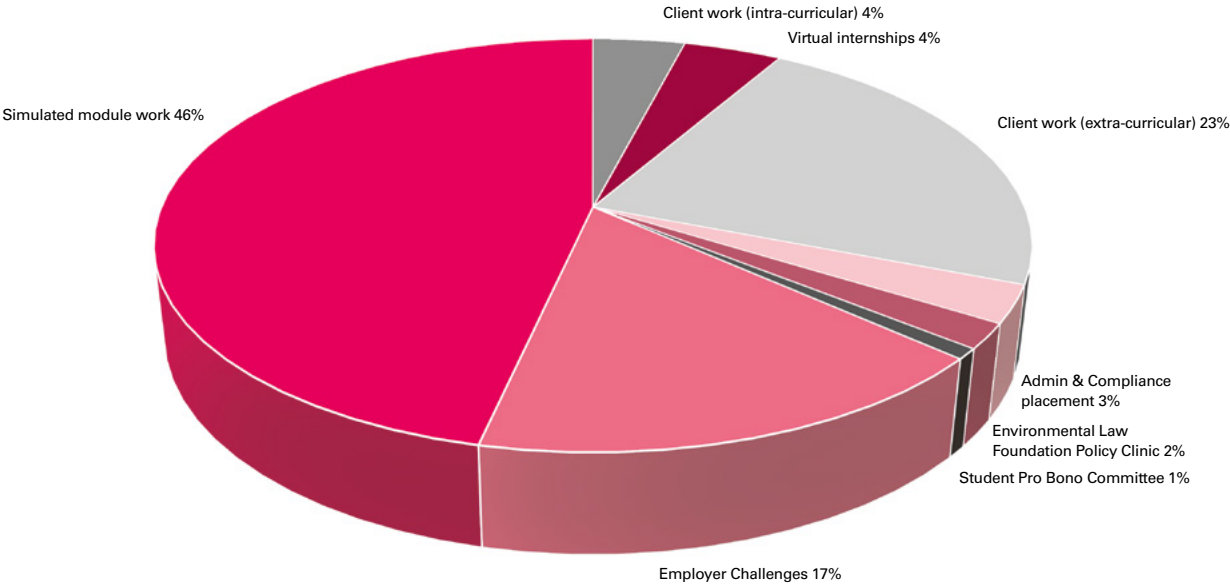
Total number of opportunities for students to work in NLS Legal activities



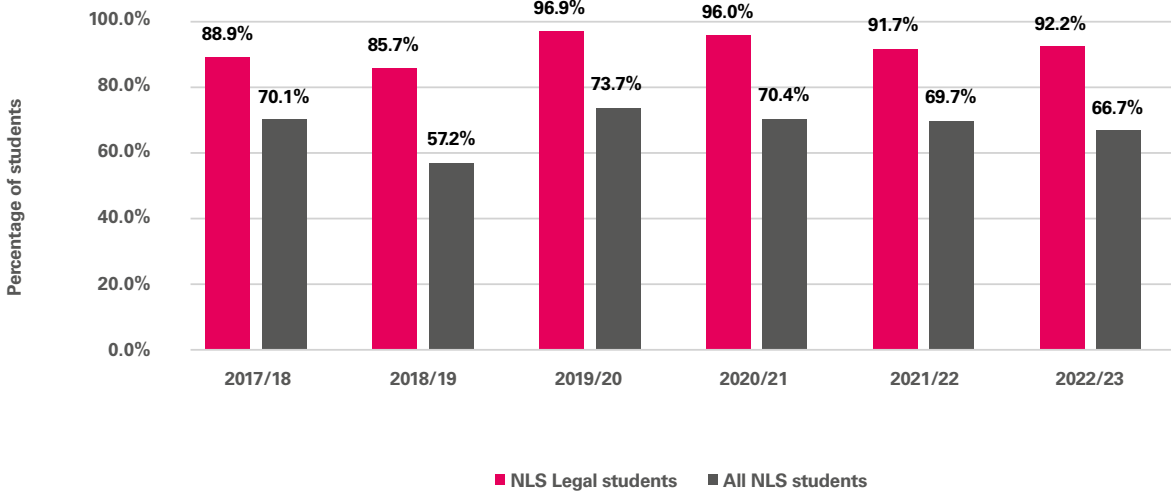
Students by course: extra-curricular (196 students)



Number of students by type of experience

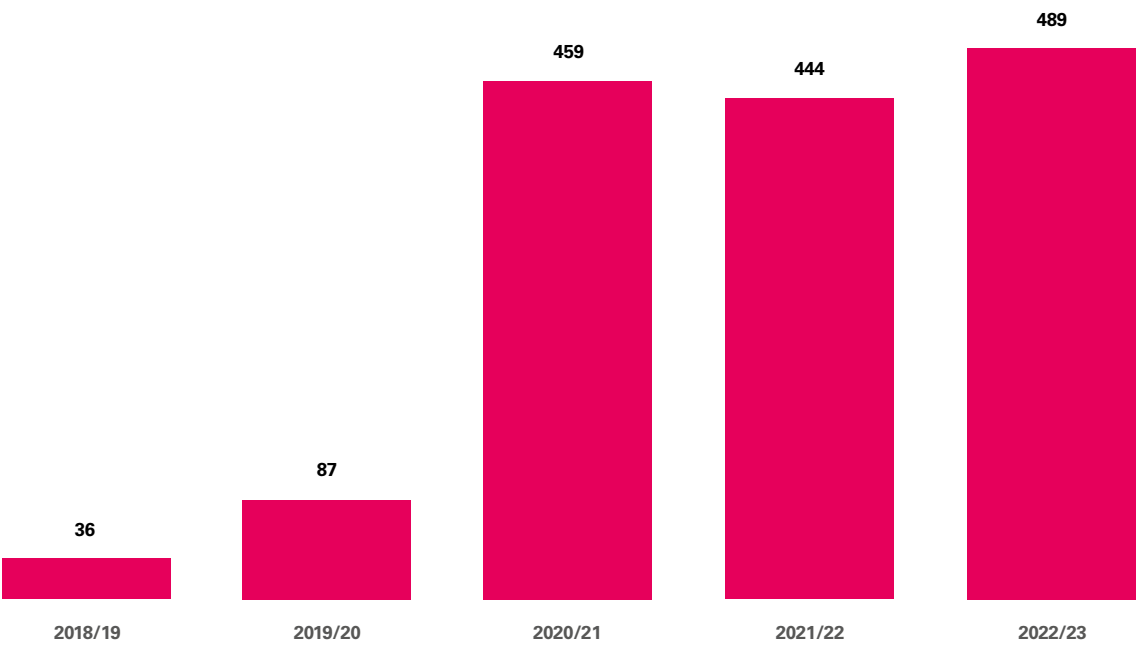


NLS Legal students achieving a 2:1 or first-class degree, compared with total NLS student population

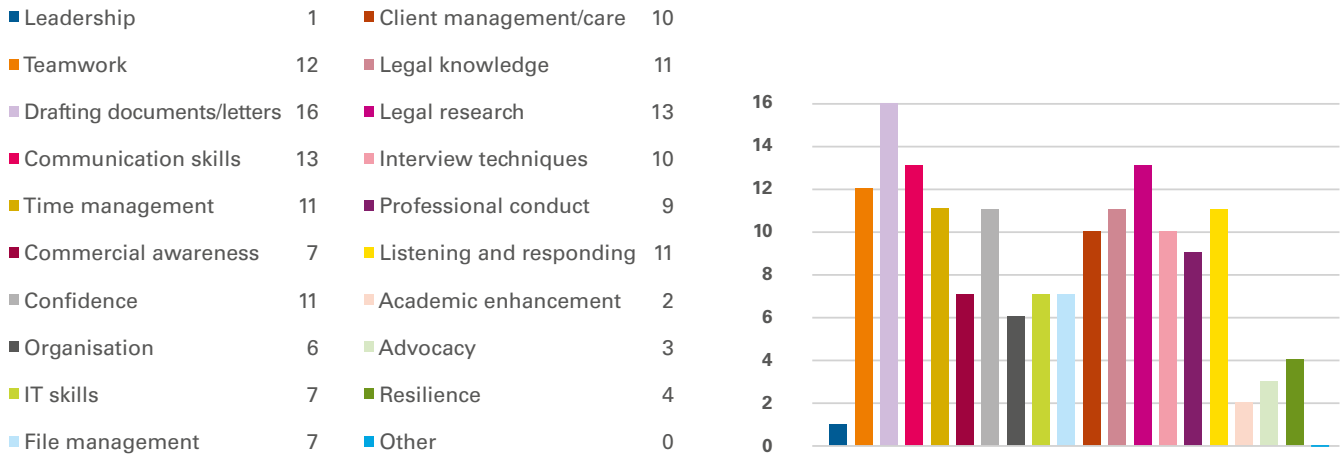


\*Figures exclude those undertaking simulated tasks only to enable a like-for-like comparison across the years

Students involved in activity for academic credit



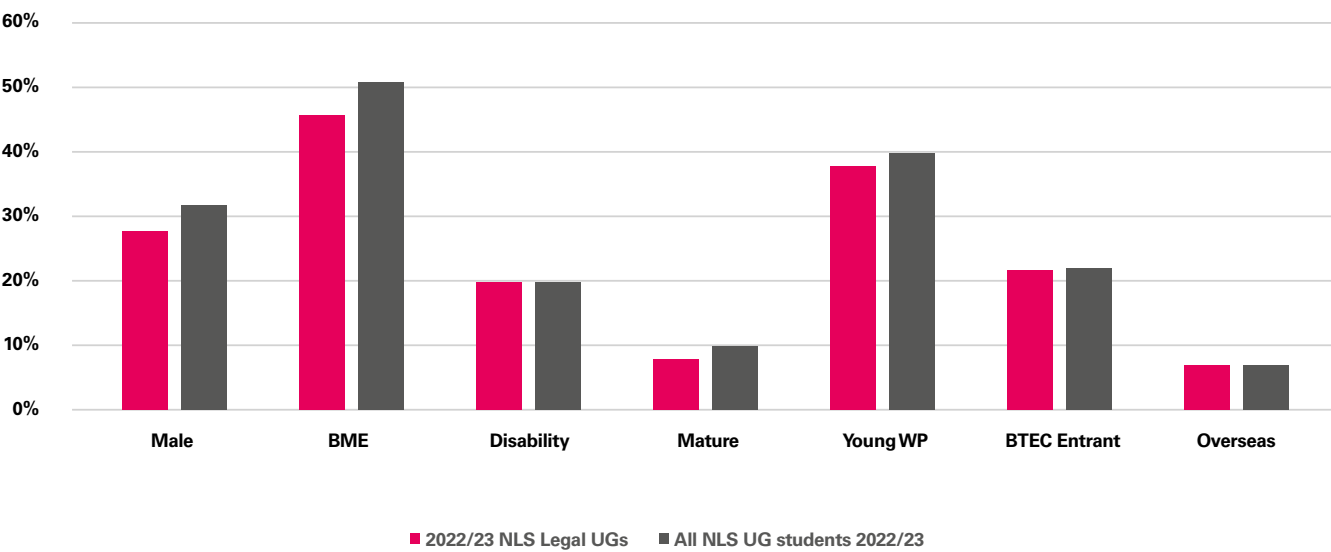
The below graph represents the answers given in our 2022/23 student survey in response to the question: ***‘What are the most valuable skills that you have gained through volunteering at NLS Legal?’*** The results demonstrate the large volume of skills developed as part of the student experience, with drafting, communication skills, research, teamwork, confidence, listening and responding, time management, legal knowledge, client care and interviewing amongst the most commonly chosen options:





2022/23 NLS Legal students by Success for All groups, compared with all NLS students (undergraduate)

Success for All profile of NLS Legal students (undergraduate)

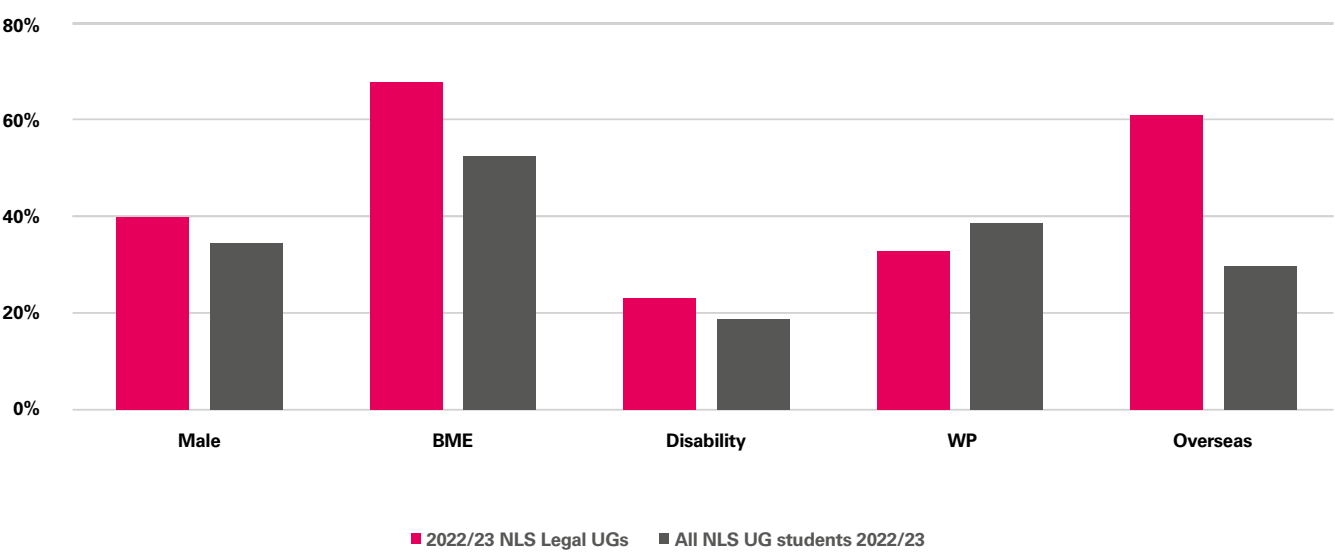


WP = Widening Participation. A student is considered WP if their home postcode is Index of Multiple Deprivation (IMD) quintile 1 or 2

	Male	BME	Disability	Mature	Young WP	BTEC Entrant	Overseas
2022/23 NLS Legal UGs	28%	46%	20%	8%	38%	22%	7%
2022/23 All NLS UGs	32%	51%	20%	10%	40%	22%	7%

2022/23 NLS Legal students by Success for All groups, compared with all NLS students (postgraduate)

Success for All profile of NLS Legal students (postgraduate)



WP = Widening Participation. A student is considered WP if their home postcode is Index of Multiple Deprivation (IMD) quintile 1 or 2

	Male	BME	Disability	WP	Overseas
2022/23 NLS Legal PGs	40%	68%	23%	33%	61%
2022/23 All NLS PGs	35%	53%	19%	39%	30%

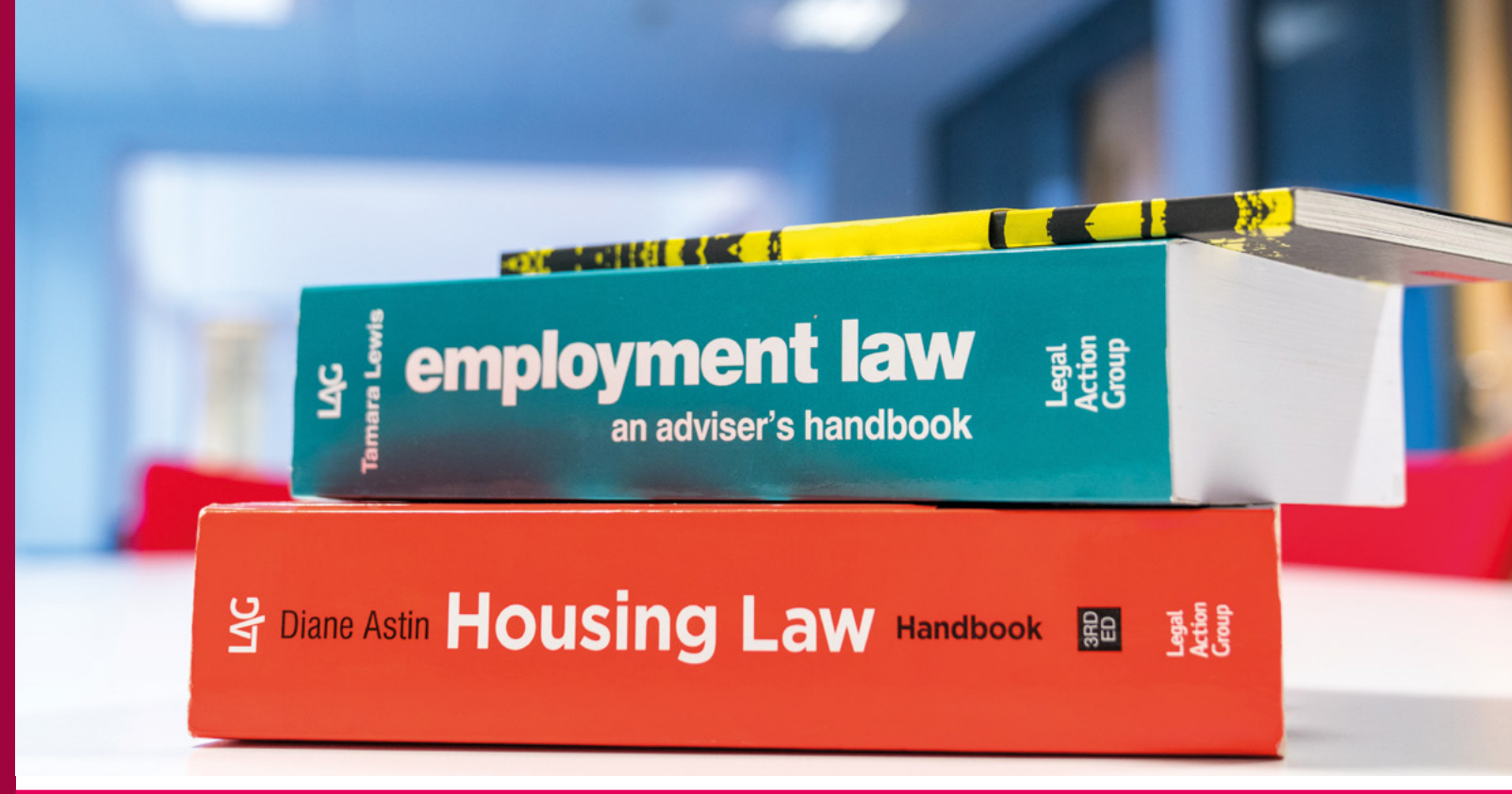




# Our services and projects

We provide advice, assistance and representation in a number of service areas including business, civil litigation, crime, employment, family, housing, intellectual property, special educational needs and disability and welfare benefits.

We detail below our various service areas and projects.



“Absolutely amazing work that you do for the community. I must thank you [Declan] and Charis for your hard work and fighting for people that otherwise wouldn't have anyone to help... I am heartily grateful for your help.”

Client feedback

## Civil litigation and business service

This year we reshaped our civil litigation and business service (previously known as the Business and Enterprise Law Service) as we welcomed a new civil litigation solicitor to NLS Legal.

This service comprises two distinct elements: a civil litigation service to address contentious disputes and a business service dedicated to non-contentious legal matters. While our commitment to supporting small and medium enterprises (SMEs) remained steadfast, the reshaped service reflects our dual focus on assisting both individuals and businesses.

### Civil litigation service

This service offers advice and representation to individuals and SMEs in a range of civil disputes. Throughout the year, we witnessed a notable uptick in enquiries encompassing money disputes, consumer claims and enforcement matters. Disputes with utility companies also appeared and were steadily on the rise. The vast demand for legal support in civil disputes highlights the challenges that the public encounters in pursuing their claims without the necessary legal guidance or representation.

## Business service

Our business service has continued to deliver guidance and support to a broad spectrum of clients, including sole traders, start-ups, SMEs, charities, and social enterprises, addressing an array of commercial issues. This includes advising on company structure, governance and specific contracts. The service proved particularly beneficial to start-ups and SMEs that would have otherwise faced financial constraints in securing legal advice privately.

Our student volunteers are involved with various aspects of our casework, from conducting client interviews and performing legal research to drafting documents such as written advice and letters before action.

## Case studies:

A client faced the unsettling scenario of their bank account being frozen by a financial institution. We contacted third parties in relation to the account freezing order ('AFO') and discovered that the AFO had been set aside by the court. Despite our client's numerous communications with the bank, the account remained inaccessible, even after a court order had been issued to unfreeze it. This protracted ordeal led to considerable distress and long-term mental health challenges for the client. The client made a complaint to the Financial Ombudsman Service ('FOS') against the bank but did not receive a satisfactory resolution in the first instance. Our team assisted the client in appealing the initial FOS decision – we helped the client in preparing arguments, written submissions, and a bundle of evidence. As a result, the compensation awarded by the FOS in their final decision was tripled, surpassing the initial amount granted in the interim decision:

“Thank you so much for your help, I honestly really appreciate it... Thank you again for everything.”

In the realm of our business service, we provided advice and guidance to a start-up company on their non-disclosure agreement, thus positioning them for potential collaboration and investment from an international corporation:

“I just want to thank you once again for all of your time invested in this. All of your knowledge and input have been profoundly valuable to us as business students and aspiring professionals. Absolutely outstanding.”



## Employment service

The employment service mainly advises clients in unlawful deduction from wages and unfair dismissal matters. This year we assisted a number of clients both for one-off advice and for ongoing support up to and including representation at the Employment Tribunal.

“Thank you so much Mathew, we had our David and Goliath. Give yourself a pat on the back, you did great.”

Client feedback



## Case studies

The highlight of the year was obtaining judgment on a case that had been ongoing since 2020. The case involved claims of discrimination and unfair dismissal. There were disputes over who the employer was initially, which needed to be clarified. Some parts of the claim were able to be resolved amicably, but we undertook a multi-day hearing on the issues that were still contested. Ultimately, it was found that our client had been unfairly dismissed. The case spanned three academic years with several staff and a number of student volunteers assisting with it during this time. We were very pleased to have obtained a positive result for our client in what was a stressful and complex case.

One of our noteworthy one-off advice matters involved assisting a client in drafting a skeleton argument prior to a ‘sift’ hearing at the Employment Appeal Tribunal (EAT). The ‘sift’ hearing helps to narrow down the issues and ensure only meritorious claims proceed. We later heard from that client that a large number of their arguments survived the ‘sift’ hearing, which was very positive. In terms of ongoing cases, we continued to have solid results from our litigated files and helped obtain positive outcomes for a number of our clients, whilst providing valuable experience to our student volunteers.

In one particular matter, we were able to achieve a successful resolution on a deduction from wages claim, where a dispute had arisen around the employment status of the client. This case provided a very helpful insight to our volunteers on looking beyond the wording of a contract to assess what the actual relationship between the parties was day-to-day.

## Welfare Benefits service

The welfare benefits service advises clients on entitlement to benefits and provides representation at Social Security Tribunal appeal hearings at the First and Upper Tier levels.

We saw a sustained increase in demand for our services across the academic year, with representation on cases almost doubling compared to the previous year. In person hearings are quickly returning to pre-pandemic levels.

Our facilities allow our student volunteers and clients to engage with online hearings from our office. The feedback received on this capability has been very positive, especially from clients who appreciate in person support from their representative and from those who may struggle to navigate such systems from their own homes. Our volunteer advocates have also appreciated being able to take instructions from clients in person and they can gain valuable experience engaging with online hearings which are now used across the vast majority of court work in most areas of law.



## Case study

The client was suffering from the impact of a long-term health condition resulting in fatigue and a reduction in his mobility. His application for the disability benefit, personal independence payment (‘PIP’), had not been successful.

We represented the client in an appeal to the First-Tier Tribunal, including filing Grounds of Appeal to the Social Security Chamber and attending the hearing with the client to represent him against the Department for Work and Pensions (‘DWP’) before the District Judge. Preparation for the matter had to be carried out remotely due to the client’s difficulties leaving his house, and appropriate arrangements made to facilitate the hearing in an accessible manner.

The matter was ultimately successful, with the DWP’s negative decision being overturned and an award of PIP was made in favour of the client. The client and his wife provided the following feedback:

“We just wanted to send an email to say a MASSIVE THANK YOU for all of the ways you have supported us during our PIP appeal and tribunal. We quite literally couldn’t have done it without [Megan and Emma]. We’ve been reflecting a lot and the biggest blessing was simply having someone beside us that was on our side – feeling seen, validated and heard was so important during this whole process. We are absolutely thrilled with the outcome and hope that it feels like as much of a win for you as it does for us!”



## Housing service

The housing service focuses on assisting those for whom legal aid funding is not available, but who cannot afford to pay for a solicitor. We have expanded the complexity of cases dealt with and see a growing focus on possession matters, mostly due to rent or mortgage arrears, arising in response to the cost-of-living crisis.

We assist tenants by providing advice to clients on queries relating to mortgaged and rented properties in the private and social housing sectors. Our student volunteers also assist clients with providing representations to various third parties, including landlords, lawyers and local authorities.

The service undertakes casework for both contested and non-contested matters. Our student volunteers assist with drafting documents for clients and the court, as well as assisting with any negotiations with the opposition and other relevant third parties.

This year our service provided assistance to several clients to negotiate with their lender or landlord to make affordable repayment plans, where they have fallen behind with contractual payments, but have not yet progressed to court. These cases fall outside the scope of legal aid but, importantly for clients, this can avoid the stressful experience of going through a court process. Where proceedings cannot be avoided, we are able to provide representation at the county court, thereby providing a continuity of service for those who are not eligible for legal aid.



## Case study

We successfully represented a client in a contested possession matter at the county court. Several days after initially receiving instructions from the client, we drafted a defence which was provided to the opposition and the court in advance of the hearing. We attended the hearing with the client and negotiated an agreement with the opposition's solicitor outside court before the hearing and the draft order was accepted by the District Judge.

The client, who suffered from long term health conditions and had to stop working as a result, said after the hearing: **“[you] have no idea of the difference you have made.”**



## Case study

C was a young man whose mainstream school placement had broken down, and who was at risk of total disengagement from the education system. NLS Legal represented C's mother in extensive negotiations with the Local Education Authority to secure alternative provision with a clear pathway into a special school placement. NLS Legal also assisted C's mother with a social care complaint and submission to the Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman. C's mother received a written apology and the Ombudsman recommended that a consolatory payment be made to our client.

## Special educational needs & disability service

NLS Legal's special educational needs and disability (SEND) service provides assistance to families of children and young people with special educational needs secure the educational, health and social provisions to which they are legally entitled.

During this academic year the firm continued to develop referral relationships with local, and national, parent advocacy groups, CICs, and other stakeholders. 2022/23 saw yet another increase in the number and complexity of cases referred to the firm, with anecdotal evidence suggesting that continued pressures on Local Authority budgets is having a direct impact on families' access to specialist provision and special school placements.

**“We were listened to and understood immediately. We were fully supported throughout the whole process. We would not have been able to go through this without your services. [NLS Legal] went above and beyond. We could not have wished for a better service.”**

Client feedback

## Criminal service

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

## Victims' Rights service

This service offers 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 the Crown Prosecution Service (CPS) not to prosecute a suspect. We also provide victim-focused advice in relation to criminal investigations and prosecutions, as well as providing advice and assistance in relation to the Criminal Injuries Compensation Scheme.

**“Thank you so much for your advice and the service the university provides.”**

Client feedback



## Case study

This year we have been assisting a client who has been the victim of a long running campaign of abuse and harassment. Following several representations to the police and CPS, the perpetrator was finally prosecuted for breaching the non-molestation order that was in place to protect our client and her family. He received a suspended custodial sentence and the court imposed a five-year restraining order, affording our client increased protection from abuse. We continue to represent the client, supporting her with a complaint to the police about their failures to prosecute the defendant for earlier breaches of the non-molestation order and highlighting concerns about the way our client has been treated by the police.



## Case study

This year we supported a client to achieve a transfer back to open conditions after he was returned to closed conditions following concerns over his conduct whilst on release on temporary licence. Whilst the allegations of misconduct were dismissed, our client was not returned to open conditions and was provided with limited information and conflicting reasons as to why his return was being delayed. We advised the client on the process and relevant rules and how to raise complaints about his situation in order to speed up his return to open conditions. After receiving his transfer back to open conditions, the client stated:

**“I wish to convey my gratitude for all your help and assistance. I will be promoting your company to any prisoner in need of good legal assistance.”**

## Pro bono service for prisoners

In 2021, we launched a new pro bono service for prisoners based at the male category B prison, HMP Stocken. This year we continued to offer the service and have advised clients on reforms, and proposed reforms, for those serving Imprisonment for Public Protection (IPP) sentences along with other issues relating to appeal and sentence progression. A number of other prisoners were provided with signposting information and public legal education resources.

## Service for those serving IPP sentences detained under the Mental Health Act 1983

Following on from our work in advising clients at HMP Stocken, we have also expanded the service to those detained under IPP sentences that have been transferred to a secure hospital setting having been found to need treatment for mental health conditions. Our work in this area highlights the grave injustice to those that remain detained under these sentences, with no certainty over when they may be released from the sentence, despite these sentences being abolished in 2012 and widely condemned.



## Intellectual Property service

The intellectual property (IP) service has once again continued to grow and develop the range of advice and services provided. The service continues to be targeted at individuals, sole traders and small start-up enterprises requiring IP advice relating to trade marks and copyright.

The complexity of enquiries continued to grow with clients often requiring assistance across multiple issues. This year has also seen us further develop the contentious IP side of our service, providing clients with support and assistance in defending their IP rights.

We have also continued to provide one-off advice and filed multiple trade marks across the year to support clients in protecting and growing their IP. This has provided students with a range of opportunities to expose them to the full range of IP. It has been great to work with students on the various matters and their inputs have been much valued.

This year saw the service attend its first inter-partes hearing at the Intellectual Property Office (IPO), securing victory for our client in a matter which had significantly impacted on its ability to trade on a well-known online platform. We also secured what we believe may be one of the first, if not the first, pro-bono cost orders in an IPO tribunal hearing. We also provided assistance in a number of complex disputes helping our clients to resolve the issues against much larger opponents.

We continue to receive enquiries through a number of sources including the Chartered Institute of Trade Mark Attorneys (CITMA) Free Advice Clinics scheme. This is a one-off advice service offering free initial advice on IP-related matters, with the opportunity for further assistance to be provided by the firm, where there is a need for ongoing pro bono advice.

A big project this year for the team was the successful delivery of a suite of IP seminars to local SMEs and individuals funded through the

Priority Skills stream of the European Social Fund (ESF). Across the year we delivered multiple seminars educating attendees on the importance of IP with the aim of helping them to avoid some of the more common pitfalls encountered in IP.

We also continued to provide seminars to organisations with whom we have previously worked, such as the Business Intellectual Property Centre (BIPC) team, Nottingham Central Library and NBV Enterprises. This also saw us on the road, delivering seminars around Nottinghamshire including in Mansfield, Bulwell and Beeston.

To the best of our knowledge, we are the only law firm in England and Wales providing wholly not-for-profit advice from a qualified Trade Mark Attorney. In addition, as Nottingham Law School is a leading provider of IP courses, it has been good to continue to develop the IP services, complementing our academic and practitioner course offerings.

## Family service

The family service provides advice, assistance and representation to clients in divorce, financial remedy, domestic abuse and private law children matters. The service was expanded in September 2021 following the recruitment of a full-time family solicitor and continues to grow. This year the service dealt with double the amount of cases than last year, and provided more opportunities for our student volunteers as a result.

Particular highlights of the year saw the service shortlisted for 'Best new pro bono activity' at the Law Works Pro Bono Awards 2022. In addition, our family solicitor was also shortlisted for 'Lawyer of the Year' at the national Modern Law Awards 2022, and won Nottinghamshire Law Society's 'Solicitor of the Year' award in April 2022.

## Case studies

This year we assisted a client to settle her matrimonial finances, after years of the parties being unable to resolve matters. Our students were involved in preparing documentation for the court and assisting the solicitor with negotiations. The settlement agreement was approved by the court. This was a very favourable outcome for the client, securing them an order for the transfer of the matrimonial home to them outright, which was the desired result. The client provided the following feedback:

**"I cannot begin to thank you for the legal advice and support you provided throughout the divorce and finance proceedings. It lasted so much longer than we anticipated and I found the process quite stressful. Without you working for me pro bono, and with limited finances, I am quite sure I would have felt that I needed to cut my losses and end the action prematurely. Instead I find I am facing the remainder of my retirement in a much better position, financially, than I ever expected. In addition I appreciated so much your commitment to my case. Your friendly, professional advice and explanations were enormously helpful to me and kept me going when I felt like giving up. Thank you for being so approachable and empathetic."**

This year, we represented a client in the Family Court as a respondent to a child arrangements 'live with' order application. The students were involved in taking initial instructions from the client and carried out a case analysis to enable us to advise accordingly. At the court hearing, we secured the client's desired outcome on the interim contact position. After the hearing, the client made the following comments:

**"I am ever so grateful for all your support today. At this point I couldn't ask for much more. It's a great starting point, I really appreciate your help."**



## Case studies

We assisted an online retailer successfully cancel a trade mark registration for its mark which had been filed by its rival. This registration was being used in bad faith to prevent our client listing its products on a well-known online trading platform. We represented the client throughout the proceedings, including representation at the tribunal.

We supported a small business in defending its trade mark application against a much larger, multi-national business. The client was able to secure registration of its trade mark application successfully facing down the much larger opponent.

We provided general assistance to a client on protecting the trade marks in its soon-to-be launched product, ensuring that the right trade marks were in place prior to launch.

**"Peter and his team handled my trademark registration in a very professional, yet friendly manner. I received excellent advice before the application was made, and was kept up to date during the process, which I really appreciated. Nothing was too much trouble, and all questions I had were answered in a simple to understand way, yet with great detail too."**

Client feedback



## Administration and compliance support placements

Our Administration and compliance support placements are an excellent opportunity for first year students to become involved in the work of NLS Legal and gain confidence. This academic year, 21 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, such as undertaking file reviews, supporting with policy updates, and carrying out relevant research. As a regulated law firm, risk and compliance are a key part of our day-to-day obligations and this opportunity provides valuable insight and skills that very few graduates would gain at such an early stage of their careers. Dealing with new enquiries allows volunteers to have a better understanding of clients' needs and the service areas we cover. It also improves their communication skills, particularly around managing expectations and client care. Reception and administrative tasks are also key elements of our daily work that give students a very valuable insight of the running of a law firm and equip them with skills that employers value. We find this is a fantastic way to start volunteering in NLS

“I want to extend my heartfelt thanks to the entire NLS Legal team for providing me with the opportunity to complete my admin and enquiries summer placement. Your trust and support have been invaluable and I am deeply grateful for it. [...] it has been a transformative experience. I would like to express my gratitude to Melissa Bailey, Carlota Gonzalez Laynez and Rachel Williams for their exceptional guidance and mentorship. Your insights have played a pivotal role in my professional growth. This summer placement has equipped me with a deeper understanding of the legal industry and the skills needed to excel in it. As I transition into the academic year, I am excited to carry forward the knowledge and experiences gained here.”

Student feedback

Legal, with a view to undertaking further volunteering opportunities in later years. We have been offering this opportunity for several years now, and it is really good to see how students improve their confidence and often continue volunteering with us on client work afterwards, making our administration and compliance support placements a perfect way to start the volunteering journey with NLS Legal. This year, we were able to offer some extra places during the summer too. We are very grateful to our fantastic team of students, that did a truly helpful and valuable job.

It is worth noting that 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 in order to support our work. The following student testimonials demonstrate the importance of gaining early experience of legal software:

“I’m a first-year law student who has had to opportunity to do some volunteer work for NLS legal and have had a first-hand experience using Clio Manage. I have found it very insightful to be able to see how a case management system works while on my law school journey. It has taught me skills about organisation and legal IT skills. I like the way the Clio dashboard clearly states the main information needed such as contact details as well as keeping track of who added or downloaded from the folder last. It is also very beneficial that there is a separate area for any deadlines to be placed so they are not missed. It has been a great experience to see how Clio works and be able to use the software for my role as a volunteer!”

Student feedback

“Using Clio in my Volunteer role at NLS Legal allowed me to review hundreds of client files in a seamless, effective, and efficient manner due to the clear layout and structure of the case management system. Utilising the Clio Case Management System at university boosted my confidence in using new Legal IT systems as I had the opportunity to understand how online case management systems work. This exposure at university has been very valuable and will allow me to feel much more comfortable when using such systems in a future legal career.”

Student feedback



## Community outreach advice services

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

We provide a free advice service, 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 and information 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 outreach sessions run fortnightly throughout October to March. This year, our three student Project Leaders, supported by a further 12 students, assisted 18 individuals as part of this service, providing supervised advice and assistance across a large range of areas including family, employment and housing.



## Black Leadership Programme

Thanks to generous funding from **Santander Universities UK**, we were able to launch a new initiative this year, providing paid work placements to law students on the NTU Black Leadership Programme. Five students undertook two-week placements and were involved in a range of activity within the firm, from supporting our team of lawyers with client and case work, to helping our administrative team. We are hugely grateful to Santander for enabling us to offer such outstanding opportunities to our students. The following testimonial from one of the students taking part in the programme highlights the impact that the placement had:

"I had the privilege of completing a Santander Placement at [NLS Legal] within my Uni, Nottingham Trent University for 2 weeks. This experience was nothing short of transformative, giving me a glimpse into the world of a solicitor and the invaluable role they play in providing much needed advice to those seeking it. From mastering the intricacies of Clio, a law-based data program, to understanding the real-world challenges faced by legal professionals, every moment was enriching. I am immensely grateful to Carlota Gonzalez Laynez, whose guidance and support helped me navigate this rewarding path towards my dream career. I have a strong belief in justice and a desire to make a positive impact in the lives of others. I also have a personal commitment to ensuring that everyone has access to legal resources and representation, especially those who may be disadvantaged or marginalized. Volunteering at NLS Legal gave me a chance to help individuals and communities in need of justice. As I look ahead, I am excited and inspired to continue my journey, fuelled by the knowledge and skills gained during these two remarkable weeks. Here's to growth, learning, and pursuing meaningful opportunities!"

————— Uchechukwu Ibeh, LLB Law with Business

"I have a personal commitment to ensuring that everyone has access to legal resources and representation, especially those who may be disadvantaged or marginalized. Volunteering at NLS Legal gave me a chance to help individuals and communities in need of justice."

## Brickfields Asia College partnership

NLS is proud to partner with Brickfields Asia College, Malaysia (Brickfields). The partnership sees a number of Brickfields' students visit NLS as part of their degree transfer programme. During their time at NLS, the Brickfields' students join us in NLS Legal to gain some practical experience and insight into the legal system of England and Wales. This year, six Brickfields' students spent three days with us undertaking tasks such as attending client meetings, conducting legal research and drafting attendance notes. The students also took part in advocacy training with our Employment Solicitor, Mathew Game, which incorporated an innovative interactive exercise with the aid of ChatGPT. Following their experience, we received the following feedback:

"Me and my friends had completed the three days internship with NLS Legal yesterday. I am writing to say thank you for organising the internship arrangement for us. It was very beneficial, indeed exceptionally good.... Mat said he was told that we would like to try advocacy, so he gave us a task to prepare for cross examination. It was tough to prepare the questions at the beginning without having any experience. But it turned out to be so exciting to cross examine the Respondent in the moot court!"

## Policy reform – Environmental Law Foundation policy clinic

Over the course of 2022/23 we were delighted to once again support the work of the Environmental Law Foundation (ELF) by running a policy clinic in collaboration with them. Callum Scott supervised the work of the policy clinic which, we are delighted to report, had a particularly high level of interest and engagement from NLS students.

The policy clinic had two work streams: the first of which saw a continuation of a long-standing collaborative project run by ELF and universities across the country on Climate Emergency Declarations (CEDs). The CEDs project saw a group of ten of our students, led by our paralegal James Sinclair, assessing the response of local authorities to their environmental obligations. The project team spent several months undertaking research and obtaining information from numerous Local Authorities. A data set covering the Local Authorities' position on the climate, their Greenhouse Gas emissions targets, and their progress towards meeting these targets was primarily obtained through statutory information requests (Environmental Information Regulation requests). The policy clinic team then assessed the data collected and prepared a report that was submitted to ELF to feed into their national research project.

The second work stream undertaken by our ELF policy clinic saw a team of five students, led by our legal assistant Catarina Galhardo Lopes, prepare a toolkit on ways in which citizens and community interest groups might use byelaws to protect waterways in their local area. The student project team evaluated the system by which byelaws are brought into existence, considered current and previous examples of how byelaws have been used to protect the environment and suggested a number of actionable steps communities can take so as to effect change in their local area. This project built upon work presented at ELF's 'Reviving UK waterways' conference: <https://elflaw.org/reviving-uk-waterways-event/>.

Both projects provided the opportunity for students interested in environmental law to obtain a detailed understanding of topical climate and environmental law issues and allowed them to develop their skills as future legal practitioners in a policy context.



## Mansfield and Ashfield

NLS Legal represents NLS in the wider NTU project to support regeneration in Mansfield & Ashfield (M&A). We contribute to the M&A programme by delivering public legal education sessions to raise awareness regarding specific legal topics that have been identified as key issues for the M&A community. M&A residents are able to access our service, and during 2022/23, we helped 12 new clients from the M&A area. Our Welfare Benefits Supervisor and SEND Solicitor worked with a group of students in the preparation and recording of seven public legal education webinars for LadyBrook Community Centre.

Our IP team significantly increased their work in the M&A area, in collaboration with the Business & Intellectual Property Centre (BIPC) project, to support business owners, entrepreneurs and inventors. We delivered two IP public legal education sessions at Mansfield library, and one in Sutton-in-Ashfield. Some of the attendees went on to access our legal advice service delivered after the events.

Our Trade Mark Attorney and Business Solicitor attended the Mansfield Business Support Showcase, which was a fruitful networking and support session.

## Virtual internships

Having introduced virtual internships as a response to the covid pandemic, we continue to offer these to support more students to gain an insight into legal work experience. This year, our virtual internships, which covered employment and family law issues, were completed by 31 students.

Virtual internships allow 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 the employability of our students and prepares them for life post study. Our students receive a post-completion certificate for their efforts.

## Student Pro Bono Committee

Our Student Pro Bono Committee (SPBC) comprises students who have excelled during the previous academic year and who have made a significant contribution above and beyond what is expected from a volunteer. The SPBC helps 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. This year, the SPBC comprised of our placement students (Cat and Nick) and the following students: Arthur Noreika, Darion Smalls, Poppy Elmer and Rumbidzai Mavera. During this academic year, the SPBC hosted a pub quiz to fundraise for the Access to Justice Foundation, raising £195 for the charity. They also co-hosted a Student and Staff Quiz Night in conjunction with NLS and NTU's student societies. In addition, they participated in the Law School Challenge in order to raise funds for two pro bono charities, Advocate and LawWorks. Their efforts saw them finish in 5th place on the national leader board, a great achievement! In total, all universities taking part in the challenge raised just under £12,000 for access to justice organisations. In between organising events and fundraising, the SPBC supported NLS and NLS Legal by taking part in an ITV News piece regarding the shortage of legal aid in the criminal field and by providing social media content in order to reach more potential student volunteers within NLS.



The SPBC (L to R in first photo): Nick Pardhanani, Arthur Noreika, Catarina Galhardo Lopes, Darion Smalls, Poppy Elmer, Rumbidzai Mavera

1st Place Team Pub Quiz night to raise funds for the Access to Justice Foundation

## LawWorks

We are a member of the LawWorks network and continue our close collaboration with them. LawWorks is a national access to justice charity supporting and developing pro bono activity across England and Wales. LawWorks helps connect people in need of free legal advice to the pro bono lawyers and organisations that provide such services. As a member of the LawWorks East Midlands Hub we attend regular meetings with other East Midlands representatives to share experiences across our organisations, update each other on our projects and activities, and facilitate referrals of enquirers in order to make sure our pro bono work reaches as many individuals in need as possible. After a few years meeting online, it was good to resume in person meetings this year, and NLS Legal hosted the summer meeting. We supported LawWorks by submitting statistics for their annual report, as every year, and submitted additional data for their Ministry of Justice 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 interactive client interviewing session, providing 20 Pathways students with an insight into the communication skills needed in order to represent clients effectively.

## NLS partnership with Support Through Court

In previous years, NLS Legal has assisted the national litigants in person charity, Support Through Court (STC), by recruiting up to 30 student volunteers per year to help them deliver their vital service. In October 2022, when STC were faced with losing significant Ministry of Justice funding, NLS launched a new partnership with STC which saw their STC Nottingham Service relocate from the Nottingham County Court to the Law School. In 2023, NLS was chosen by STC as the host for their new National Online Service, which launched in July 2023. Both services run from the law school's premises helping thousands of litigants in person and providing hundreds of work experience opportunities for our NLS students every year.

Our two services now work closely together for the benefit of our respective clients and with the shared aim of providing access to justice. We signpost people to each other's service, share client meeting and online hearing facilities (with procedures for maintaining client confidentiality in place), and are a source of support for each other to help share the load of the pressures of working in frontline access to justice work. We are extremely proud of this partnership and it is a pleasure to support it and work so closely with such a wonderful organisation.



# 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 489 students took part in NLS Legal activity for academic credit, the highest ever number of intra-curricular opportunities. For the activity detailed below, save for Employer Challenges, the students will prepare a reflective portfolio, 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 over the following pages our wide range of intra-curricular activity.

## Placement students

Each year, we offer up to two placement student opportunities, which allows our students to complete their third year with us on placement, as part of their Law (Sandwich) LLB degree. They undertake the role of Legal Assistant, completing a mix of legal work and administrative duties to support the firm. Our 22/23 placement students were Catarina Galhardo Lopes and Nick Pardhanani. Both Cat and Nick provided significant contribution to the firm, supporting all of the various service areas and activity. They were fantastic to work with, produced very high-quality work and were hugely valued members of the team. We wish them all the best in the future studies and careers. Please do read on, to hear first-hand about their experiences:



### Catarina Galhardo Lopes

My placement year at NLS Legal was probably the best decision I have made for my academic and professional development! I got to work on a wide variety of tasks, projects and areas of the legal field and develop key skills such as confidence, communication (oral and written), legal research and drafting.

During my placement year I got to assist in different service areas, namely Family, Employment, Intellectual Property and Special Educational Needs and Disability (SEND), by attending client meetings, writing attendance notes, doing legal research, drafting advice letters and other legal documents such as divorce applications and also interviewing clients. A lot of my learning came from working alongside my supervisors and seeing first-hand how they reasoned and approached the resolving of legal issues.

The administrative side of my role as a legal assistant involved helping with the general running of the firm by working on admin tasks such as covering the reception area, processing incoming post, monitoring, triaging and responding to emails on the firm's inboxes and logging client enquiries in the system. Even though this part of my role wasn't 100% legal based, I felt it was very important for me to learn and understand the various aspects and duties involved with the daily running of a fully regulated law firm.

In my placement year I got to attend different events such as award ceremonies and conferences, network with different legal professionals (including Judges!) and even lead one of NLS Legal's policy projects in cooperation with the Environmental Law Foundation based on 'Byelaws and how they can help to revive UK Waterways'.

I cannot imagine completing my LLB without my placement year at NLS Legal and all the experience and knowledge that came with it. My biggest recommendation to any current or prospective NLS student is to definitely get involved with the opportunities that NLS Legal is offering be it volunteering to work on client cases, support the admin team with new enquiries or risk and compliance or even practicing your advocacy by representing clients at the tribunal.

“My biggest recommendation to any current or prospective NLS student is to definitely get involved with the opportunities that NLS Legal is offering be it volunteering to work on client cases, support the admin team with new enquiries or risk and compliance or even practicing your advocacy by representing clients at the tribunal.”





## Nick Pardhanani

I had an incredible experience during my placement at NLS Legal, where I engaged in a broad spectrum of service areas, gaining first hand insights into the practical aspects of law.

A significant learning curve for me was in adapting my writing style. Initially, my legal writing mirrored my academic style which I realized may not always be suitable for practical applications. Throughout the year, with the guidance of my line manager, I honed my skills to become more concise and learned to adjust my writing to suit different audiences, whether it was for clients requiring advice letters or for preparing court submissions.

The pro bono work at NLS Legal was particularly fulfilling, being able to help people who might not have been able to access legal help was one of the best parts of being a part of NLS Legal - it's the main reason I chose to study a law degree in the first place.

My career prospects have substantially improved thanks to this placement. I've already secured interviews and mini-pupillages, bolstered by my hands-on experience at NLS Legal. This practical exposure has been a significant advantage in my applications.

Furthermore, participating in the advocacy service was one of the most important experiences I've had. Conducting advocacy at the social security tribunal under supervision greatly boosted my confidence in live advocacy and reaffirmed my decision to pursue a career at the bar post-graduation.

Beyond legal practice, I also had the opportunity to contribute to the student committee. Alongside fellow students, I helped raise funds for access to justice, organizing various events for the law school as a whole.

In conclusion, my time at NLS Legal was instrumental in shaping my development both as a student and a budding legal professional. It cemented my commitment to a career in law and deepened my connection with the university as well as the wider legal profession. I would strongly recommend any and all students to get involved at NLS Legal - it's a fantastic way to develop your CV and makes you stand out from the crowd.



**“My time at NLS Legal was instrumental in shaping my development both as a student and a budding legal professional. It cemented my commitment to a career in law and deepened my connection with the university as well as the wider legal profession. I would strongly recommend any and all students to get involved at NLS Legal.”**



## Applied Legal Knowledge (Civil Practice)

A total of 25 second year students undertook an NLS Legal element as part of their Applied Legal Knowledge (Civil Practice) module. The NLS Legal element involved each student spending a minimum of 24 hours with the firm to provide the students with insight into the civil practice areas that NLS Legal commonly deals with. The students attended two workshops and were trained on client interviewing skills, legal research and drafting attendance notes. The students then put this into practice and attended a client meeting, with the NLS Legal supervising lawyer, dealing with either civil litigation, family, intellectual property or special educational needs and disability (SEND) matters. The students then considered the legal advice to be given, drafted the attendance notes and obtained feedback on their work. Once all students had attended their client meetings, we held a reflection workshop where, as a group, we discussed the nature of the legal issues encountered and what the students learnt from their experiences.

## 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 provided 334 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 solicitors on their work. They also reflect on their experience within group sessions and in their end of module reflective portfolio, encouraging our students to develop a reflective and growth mindset.

## Law in Practice

Two 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, SEND and social justice matters, undertaking a minimum of 35 hours work experience.

## Employer Challenges

A total of 121 students completed Employer Challenges with NLS Legal (96 undergraduates and 25 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, social media strategy and how we could develop our services to help student volunteers who are impacted by the cost-of-living crisis.



# Highlights



Katie Smith and Peter Vaughan receiving their Vice Chancellor's Excellence Awards

## Awards

### Vice Chancellor's Excellence Awards 2023

- Katie Smith – Excellence in Professional Services
- Peter Vaughan – Practice Excellence Award

### Nottinghamshire Law Society's Annual Awards 2023

- Katie Smith – Solicitor of the Year
- Carlota Gonzalez Laynez – Business Support Champion

### Clio Reisman Awards 2023 (International)

- Runner-up – Legal Innovation

### Modern Law Awards 2023 (National)

- Shortlisted – Client Care Award
- Shortlisted – Lawyer of the Year – Katie Smith

### LawWorks Pro Bono Awards 2022 (National)

- Shortlisted: best new pro bono activity (Family Law Service)

### HE Innovate Awards 2022 (National)

- 2nd place: most innovative approach to developing employability skills

A number of our talented students were also recognised via the following NLS Annual Prizes:

### The NLS Dean's Award for Outstanding Achievement:

- Joreen Lord

### The NLS Dean's Award for Contribution to the Community:

- James Spencer

### NLS Richard Bagley Award for Outstanding Contribution to Pro Bono (Undergraduate):

- Darion Smalls

### NLS Richard Bagley Award for Outstanding Contribution to Pro Bono (Postgraduate):

- Sophie Clay

## Public legal education, conferences and other activity

Our staff and students work incredibly hard to promote pro bono work, clinical legal education and access to justice, as well as supporting careers' advice and employability. From delivering sessions addressed to students, individuals, small businesses and charities, to attending networking events or presenting at conferences, the team endeavours to promote access to justice by sharing their knowledge and showcasing our pro bono work and teaching law firm model at every opportunity.

**Experience the Law Days:** our family solicitor Katie Smith, with the support of SEND solicitor Callum Scott and paralegal Rachel Williams, delivered sessions on "Introduction to client interviewing" to three groups of Year 12 students from local sixth forms and colleges, as part of a taster session for students who are thinking of choosing a law degree.

**Career talks at the University of Nottingham:** our solicitors Callum Scott and Katie Smith delivered four career talks at the University of Nottingham. These are sessions we deliver to provide information about Nottingham Law School's postgraduate conversion courses, including how to become a lawyer as a graduate without a law degree.

**Pro Bono Week event:** on 10 November 2022, during Pro Bono Week, we hosted an event in collaboration with Support Through Court (STC) about the benefits of pro bono to our community and students' career progression. The event was attended by NLS students, with a panel consisting of NLS Legal and STC staff, plus student volunteers from both organisations who shared their experience and answered questions from the students in attendance.

“Thank you so much for your advice and the service the university provides.”

Client feedback

### Nottinghamshire Law Society's Annual Award winners 2023







**NLS Client Interviewing final:** on 1 December 2022, Callum Scott was one of the guest judges for the final of the NLS Client Interviewing competition. Along with a solicitor from private practice, Callum observed two pairs of NLS students who conducted a mock interview including consideration of the client's options and provision of initial advice. The winning pair then advanced to a national competition. One of the winning pair was an NLS Legal volunteer this academic year too so great to see them putting the practical skills they had developed with us to good use!

**NLS Law Fair:** on 24 January 2023, Catarina Galhardo Lopes, Callum Scott and Charis Wong attended the NLS law fair. The law fair was a great opportunity to meet students and let them know about the NLS Legal offer, how they can get involved, and to explain in detail the work we undertake in the firm.

**NTU Student Sales Academy:** on 31 January 2023, Laura Pinkney presented at the launch event for the NTU Student Sales Academy. Laura spoke to a group of over 50 NTU students, discussing the importance of sales' skills within the legal profession.

**93% Club event:** on 29 March 2023, Jane Jarman, Laura Pinkney and Callum Scott attended a 93% Club's event, held at NTU. The student-led event included a panel discussion at which one of our alumnus, Charley Brennan, trainee at Irwin Mitchell, was a speaker, followed by networking. The 93% Club is a national organisation which seeks to address the underrepresentation of state-school pupils in the legal profession.

**Global Legal Skills Conference:** on 30, 31 July and 1 August, Mathew Game, Jane Jarman, Katie Smith and Peter Vaughan participated in the Global Skills Conference that was hosted by Nottingham Law School. The Global Legal Skills Conference focuses on international legal education and essential skills, including legal writing, legal research, legal reasoning, legal English, translations and advocacy skills. Additional topics include creating appropriate materials and assignments, cross-cultural and intercultural issues, classroom teaching, clinical legal education, academic support, international legal exchanges and related fields. The conference was very successful and well attended, with delegates from over 16 countries.

Mathew delivered a session about our Virtual Internship model and the employability skills and other benefits it provides to our students. Jane and Peter presented a paper focusing on their work in integrating practical legal skills into a vocational qualification course for training trade mark attorneys. Finally, Katie presented on our intra-curricular activity, our Outreach Project and our Tribunal Advocacy Service, outlining the benefits these provide to our students and the community.

## Public legal education

Our intellectual property (IP) team delivered a large number of public legal education sessions on IP during the academic year 2022/23. The team delivered 15 sessions to increase awareness of IP amongst local businesses and individuals. A number of those sessions were delivered as part of the Priority Skills project, a program to support SMEs in the area, part-funded by the European Social Fund.

Our employment solicitor also delivered public legal education sessions as part of the Priority Skills project and our welfare benefits team delivered a session to the service users of a local mental health charity.

Our welfare benefits and SEND supervisors also produced seven webinars for Ladybrook Community Centre in Mansfield as part of the NTU Mansfield and Ashfield programme.

In total, over 85 delegates attended our public legal education sessions this year, a mix of online and in person. Below is a selection of feedback, received from those attending:

"Being completely truthful, I would never have expected the phrase "that was so enjoyable!" to have followed a comment about attending an IP seminar! But the dream team of Peter Vaughan, Matilda Kapala and Callum Scott at Nottingham Law School made it so accessible and informative that I'll definitely be attending the remaining sessions. Obviously with the expectation they'll be peppered with Lego and Potterisms..."

"This course has been so helpful with my brand development and feel like it has hugely influenced me."

"Thanks so much! Gained so much knowledge from this! It's been fab."

"Very enlightening and delivered in a good and interesting way."

"Really informative and well delivered. An incredibly beneficial experience."

"Really informative & lots & lots of helpful tips and advice – thank you!"

**"Fantastic! Very informative and interactive – all my questions were answered."**

Delegate feedback

## NLS Legal visits

We had some high-profile visits to NLS Legal again this academic year. In January 2023, we were honoured and delighted to host His Excellency, Johnston Busingye, the High Commissioner of Rwanda. In November 2022 we welcomed Hannah Browne, Lead Policy and Research Analyst at the Higher Education Statistics Agency (HESA) and in May 2023 we welcomed a delegation from the Legal Services Board (LSB) including LSB Chair, Alan Kershaw, board member, Catherine Brown and CEO Matthew Hill. These visits are a great opportunity for us to showcase our work, explain our unique model and have fruitful discussions about legal regulation, access to justice and incorporating legal work experience and training into academic study.

## Media coverage

Our rebranding from NLS Legal Advice Centre to NLS Legal was featured in The Law Gazette (October 2022): [bit.ly/NLSLegalRebrand](https://bit.ly/NLSLegalRebrand)

One of our solicitors, Callum Scott, commented on working as a paralegal as a career path for The Times (October 2022): [bit.ly/BecomingaParalegal](https://bit.ly/BecomingaParalegal)

Callum was also interviewed for Lawyer Monthly (April 2023): [bit.ly/TeachingLawFirmOffer](https://bit.ly/TeachingLawFirmOffer)

Nottingham Law School's collaboration with Support Through Court appeared in Legal Futures (October 2022): [bit.ly/STCCollaboration](https://bit.ly/STCCollaboration)

Our housing and welfare benefits supervisor, Emma McGowan, wrote an article for The Law Gazette about the impact of the cost-of-living crisis on the access to justice sector (April 2023): [bit.ly/CostofLivingImpact](https://bit.ly/CostofLivingImpact)

We were featured on the East Midlands Business Link for our double award win on the Nottinghamshire Law Society Annual Awards 2023 (May 2023): [bit.ly/NLSLegalDoubleAwardWin](https://bit.ly/NLSLegalDoubleAwardWin)

Our employment solicitor, Mathew Game, wrote an article about ChatGPT and how AI is changing the future of law for LawCareers.net (June 2023): [bit.ly/LawandChatGPT](https://bit.ly/LawandChatGPT)



# Client feedback

“ Thank you very much for the advice and help with my understanding when it has come to my employment issue, the advice has been invaluable to me in understanding my position and my next steps forward.

“ The support provided was invaluable in my position as a startup business with no experience in legal matters. The quotations I received from law firms prior to finding the NLS Legal were prohibitively expensive.

Heartfelt thanks you so much to Mrs Emma McGowan and Mr Declan NLS Legal for your invaluable help in a really difficult and dark moment for me. I found very attentive and empathetic people, professional beyond my expectations who made a huge difference. Thanks.

“ Fantastic. Took a worry and stress off me and put my mind at rest. Thank you very much. Very professional.

“ We could not have envisioned a better experience. We could, quite literally, not have done this without you. We are forever grateful.

“ Cannot say enough about this Service. Really helpful and friendly, we felt listened to and helped us win our case. Would recommend NLS Legal to anyone.

“ If it hadn't been for you and your service I would be consigned to the scrap heap of old age with no help. I am eternally grateful to you. So pleased I eventually found you.

Thanks for the really good news and all your help in resolving this matter, I am very pleased that the verdict went our way after all the effort you and your colleagues and students have put into this. Once again many thanks to you all for the help and guidance you have given us in handling this issue. I am glad we can say that it is coming to an end.

“ Absolutely amazing team at NLS Legal. Communication was absolutely amazing, and they spend quality time listening to me diligently. More importantly trying their best possible to put my mind at ease. I really appreciate the legal service I received. Thank you.

“ I can't thank NLS legal enough for all their hard work with my case. Without you, I wouldn't have had a voice to the authorities. A massive thank you Rachel & Laura for their time, effort and advice on my matter.

# Student feedback

I just wanted to say thank you for the support and feedback you have provided. I found it an interesting piece of work, and I enjoyed diving into Westlaw and researching the latest caselaw. It was also quite satisfying to know that the research I undertook had a positive real-world consequence, compared to the theoretical side of my academic studies.

“ The team were very welcoming and friendly. The client did not attend for the original opportunity I volunteered for, however the team kindly gave me first priority over any new opportunity. I was very grateful for this. The new opportunity was very exciting, I enjoyed being rewarded with responsibility from the outset. After the meeting, the team provided multiple materials to assist me with my research and notes, this was very helpful. The experience as a whole was amazing and I would definitely volunteer again. Thank you to Katie, James and Cat!

I have asked yourself [Emma] and Megan to be my referees as the opportunities you provided at NLS Legal have had a huge impact on my employability. I am so grateful for the support you provided during my time volunteering and I talked about the cases I worked on during my interviews.

“ It was a valuable experience that allowed me to witness first-hand the dedication and impact of your team in providing legal services to underserved communities.

“ I gained first hand experience of the legal issues faced by disadvantaged communities and individuals who lack access to legal resources. This exposure deepened my understanding of social inequalities and the importance of pro bono work in addressing those issues.

“ Thank you so much for the opportunity to work with all of you. I've learned a lot and I loved to be in a professional environment working in real life cases.

“ It has been lovely working in NLS Legal and I think this is an amazing opportunity for first-year students like me.

“ It was a great experience and I learnt a lot about how a law firm runs and operates.



# Profiles of former students



## Molly Broster

Since graduating from NLS I have been coordinating a team of doctors for a medical NGO at the EU's external borders in Serbia, and in January this year will be applying for pupillage.

### Experience at NLS Legal

While at times terrifying (in the best way possible), volunteering at NLS Legal became the most integral part of my personal and professional development during my time at NLS.

I spent 2 years at NLS, studying the Graduate Diploma in Law and the Bar Training Course. During my studies I started as a caseworker for the Social Security Team and Nottingham Women's Centre. Following these cases I became a Lead Adviser and later trained as a Social Security Tribunal Advocate for the Free Representation Unit.

The range of law and cases I was lucky enough to work on developed my interests and confirmed a career in Social Justice was for me. Having the privilege to interview and build a relationship with clients was the biggest takeaway from my time volunteering. Along with the immense support from both Laura and Emma, being trusted by clients built my confidence and practical knowledge like no other experience.

I would strongly encourage any prospective or current student to get involved as much as they can, not only because it deepens your practical and personable skills, but because the team is a very special one to volunteer for!

“The range of law and cases I was lucky enough to work on developed my interests and confirmed a career in Social Justice was for me.”

“The experience I gained in both written and oral advocacy throughout my time with NLS Legal was absolutely invaluable when I came to apply to pupillage. When asked the inevitable question, ‘what have you done that shows your commitment to the Bar?’, I was able to talk about real cases in which I had played a part.”



## David Illingworth

Volunteering with NLS legal was the single best thing I did during my time as a GDL distance learning student at NTU. It is also the one thing which contributed the most towards my securing pupillage at Exchange Chambers in Manchester, which I commenced in September 2023.

I was on the GDL distance learning course throughout the Covid pandemic, 2020-22. NLS Legal were very proactive in ensuring distance learners benefited from the shift to remote or hybrid working occasioned by the pandemic. This gave me a wealth of opportunities to gain experience in both contentious and non-contentious matters.

For me, the opportunity to conduct real-world advocacy was the biggest highlight. Uniquely, NLS students are able to represent clients either in employment or social security tribunals via their NLS Legal Advocacy Service. I was able to do a little of both, representing a number of clients in benefits appeals before appearing in the Employment Tribunal in an unlawful deduction of wages case.

The experience I gained in both written and oral advocacy throughout my time with NLS Legal was absolutely invaluable when I came to apply to pupillage. When asked the inevitable question, ‘what have you done that shows your commitment to the Bar?’, I was able to talk about real cases in which I had played a part. I should also add that the support and guidance from the supervising solicitors at NLS Legal is second to none, and really helped me to develop my skills during my time there.



# Our team

## Our staff 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).

**Callum Scott** (SEND Solicitor)

**Katie Smith** (Family Solicitor)

**Peter Vaughan** (Trade Mark Attorney)

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

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

**Carlota Gonzalez Laynez** (Practice Manager)

**Declan Austin** (Paralegal)

**Megan Russell** (Paralegal)

**James Sinclair** (Paralegal)

**Rachel Williams** (Paralegal)

**Melissa Bailey** (Administrator)

**Matilda Kapala** (Legal Assistant)

**Catarina Galhardo Lopes** (Legal Assistant – Placement Student)

**Nick Pardhanani** (Legal Assistant – Placement Student)

## 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 2022/23 Student Pro Bono Committee

Poppy Elmer

Catarina Galhardo Lopes

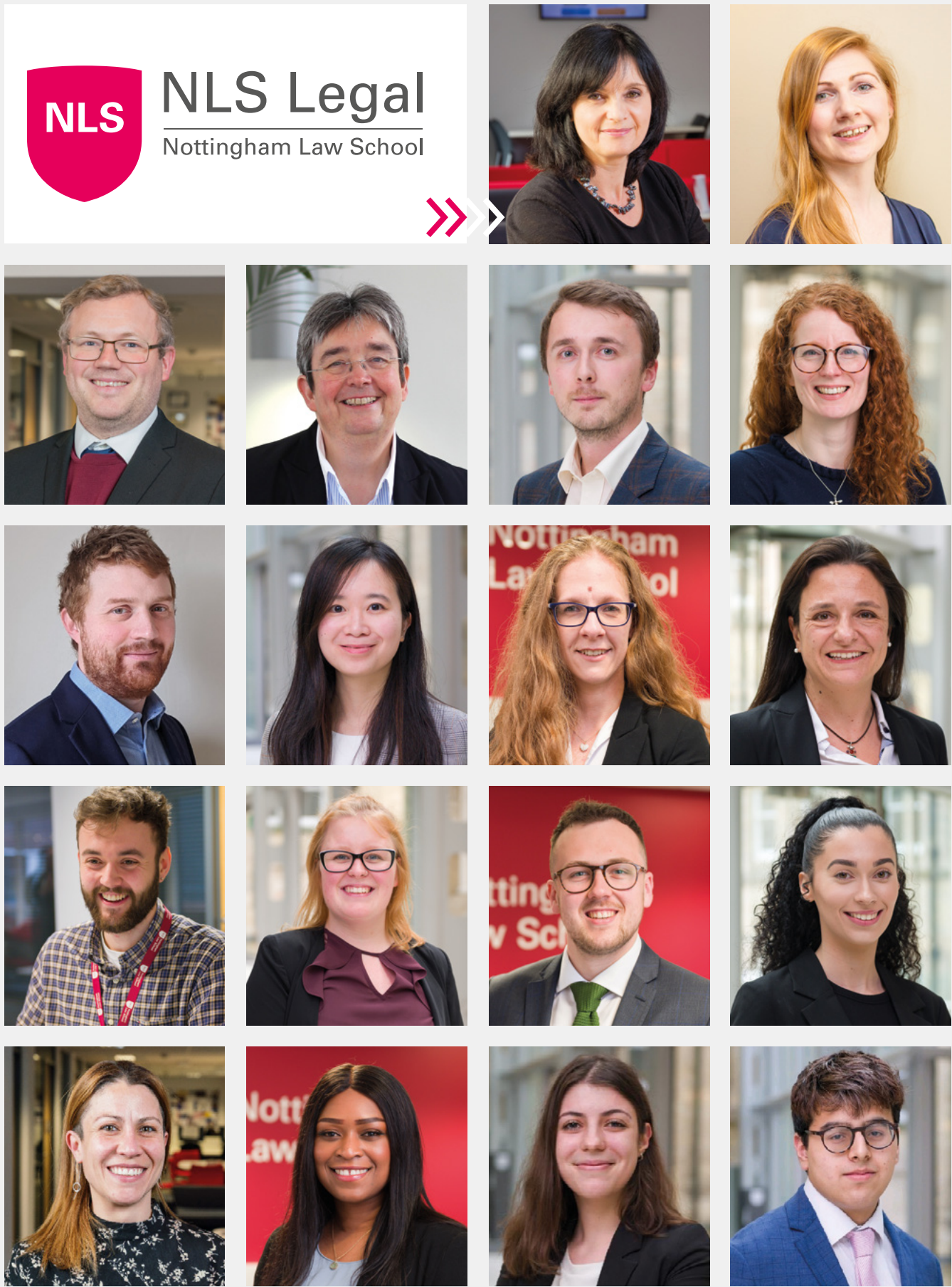
Rumbidzai Maverera

Arthur Noreika

Nick Pardhanani

Darion Smalls

“I can’t express how grateful I am for the team’s unwavering support throughout this entire process. Your guidance and perseverance have been truly invaluable.”





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Nottingham Law School



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