



UCL

UCL Integrated Legal Advice Clinic 2018 Impact Report

UCL Integrated Legal Advice Clinic

“We have always been committed to exposing students to the operation of law in the real world and to experiential learning. Now, more than ever, it is important that we continue to inspire the next generation of lawyers to pursue careers in the public interest”

Jacqui Kinghan, Head of Teaching and Learning, UCL Centre for Access to Justice.

Delivering an improved service

This year we have continued to provide pro bono and legally aided casework and representation services to the local community in the areas of housing, community care, education law and welfare benefits. The Clinic prioritises taking on cases in the local area – Newham and surrounding boroughs. Due to ongoing research into health justice partnerships, we also aim to prioritise cases where clients have been referred to us by their GPs or a member of practice staff.

Progress through research

Since January 2017, UCL iLAC has hosted a study on the health impacts of legal advice. This work explores the health and well-being of clients using the service, how legal problems affect health, and the role that legal advice can play in supporting the health of individuals and the work of health services. Recruitment for the study finished in June 2018, with 100 clients participating in surveys and a further eight clients and five GPs taking part in interviews. Results will be prepared in early 2019 and are expected to be published later in the year which we will be pleased to share with you next year.

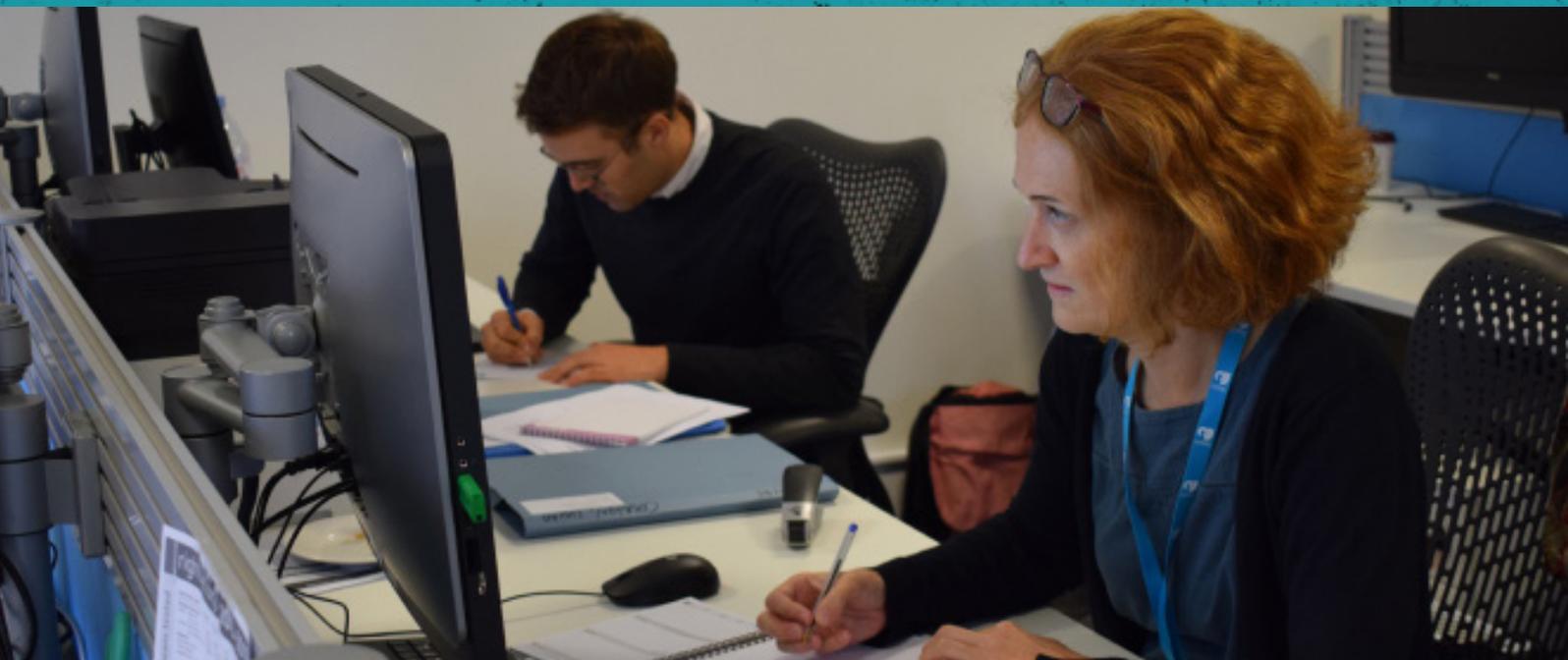


2017-18 Casework in context

- 213 total new enquiries received
- 130 cases for 111 clients taken on; 22 more cases than 2016-17
- 81% of these were welfare benefits and housing cases; 75% of our clients reported an annual income of under £10,000
- 1 in 5 of our clients comes to us from an interaction with the health services
- 23 student placements; 10 more than 2016-17
- 1,128 student volunteering hours; 758 more than 2016-17
- Over 75% of clients self-reported improvements in well-being and reductions in anxiety
- 100% of clients would seek advice from the Clinic again

“UCL legal team have changed our outlook on the law. We feel privileged to have been looked after so well and fully involved in the entire case. The case preparation and presentation was excellent and (CAJ Advice Fellow) Catriona was exceptional. Thank you from the bottom of our hearts.”

UCL iLAC Client



Students and Education at UCL iLAC

UCL iLAC would not be able to achieve its mission without the hard work and dedication of our students and the advisers and solicitors that support them.

In 2017-18, 23 undergraduate and postgraduate students undertook placements at the Clinic. Of these 23 students, 12 participated as part of a curricular placement (final year undergraduate course Access to Justice and Community Engagement and the UCL-HKU Double Degree Programme) and a further 11 took part on an extra-curricular basis. Together, these students put in a total of 1,128 hours of voluntary work.

Through iLAC, students who engage with the Centre for Access to Justice access a unique training ground for those seeking to experience the realities of the UK's legal system and the difficulties faced by those within it. With 200 students per year involved across a range of projects, including UCL iLAC, our students are being instilled with a deep sense of social justice and a pro bono work ethic.

In Summer 2018, the Clinic was delighted to be able to recruit three Summer Fellows. The Summer Fellowships are paid three to four month placements where students work intensively on UCL iLAC casework, supporting the Clinic's staff to ensure the Clinic is able to remain open during the summer months and continue providing a high quality service to our clients.

The Summer Fellowships are also an important part of the Clinic's social mobility agenda, ensuring that no student is excluded from undertaking valuable work experience in public interest or social welfare fields because they are unable to afford unpaid work.

Student Involvement

We actively encourage students to be involved in their community, using the skills they learn in their courses to benefit society. UCL iLAC is proud of our volunteer students and your support is setting them up to be conscientious citizens, giving voices to the silenced.

All extra-curricular students were recruited as UCL iLAC Assistants, and undertook a range of tasks including taking new enquiries over the phone and in person; assisting with data collection; sending routine letters; and case file management.

12 students volunteering at UCL iLAC conducted supervised casework in the areas of welfare benefits, housing, and community care as part of the Access to Justice and Community Engagement course. This is double the students that participated last year, demonstrating the growing influence of the Clinic.

All student volunteers received specific training sessions on client care skills, working with vulnerable clients and confidentiality. This year, volunteers also had the opportunity to attend a training session delivered by Disability Rights UK specifically on welfare benefits.

"I can now see the importance of clinical legal education. My time at the legal clinic has afforded me so much perspective that cannot be found within the classroom. This journey has been an enriching and fulfilling one."

UCL iLAC Student Volunteer

Looking forward to the future

Welcoming New Faces

In September 2017, the Integrated Legal Advice Clinic was delighted to announce that Rachel Knowles, Senior Teaching Fellow and Solicitor joined the Clinic on a full-time basis as our Head of Legal Practice. Rachel had previously been working with both the Clinic and children's rights charity, Just for Kids Law. Since Rachel started there has been an increase in the number of community care cases we have taken on; accounting for 13% of the new cases in this period.

We also welcomed several other new members of the team including Sarah Joy, part-time Welfare Benefits Adviser; Catriona Macdonald, CAJ Advice Fellow; and Thul Khan, Housing Solicitor.

A Permanent Home

Originally based in the Liberty Bridge Road GP Surgery in Stratford, UCL iLAC was required to re-locate due to the expansion of the Clinic's services and client base, and the lack of available co-located space. While based in temporary office space on Stratford High Street, UCL worked to secure a permanent space for the Clinic which resulted in the acquisition of an office space in the Solar House Office building. Located on Romford Road, the new premises is in the heart of the vibrant Stratford Community, demonstrating our commitment to providing change for years to come.

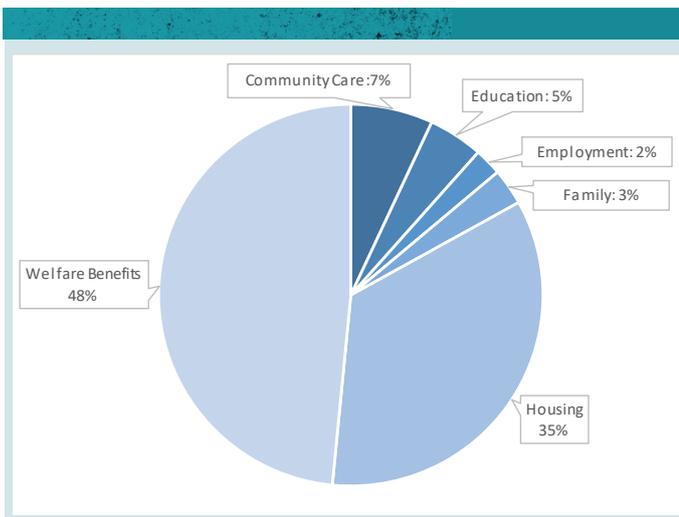
Having this new space offers exciting opportunities for greater engagement and outreach with the community, teaching, and research. This will allow the Clinic to broaden its services and give the community further legal support.

An Integrated Approach

We are delighted to announce that the Clinic was recently awarded a legal aid contract in the categories of housing law and community care law, which formally came into effect on 01 September 2018. As part of the contract verification process, the Clinic was also awarded the Specialist Quality Mark.

Obtaining a legal aid contract has been a significant step for the Clinic. As a university in the unique position of holding a legal aid contract, we look forward to offering a full range of pro bono and legal aid services to the local community in Newham. Further, the addition of the legal aid contract has allowed us to offer a broader range of educational opportunities for students, from initial advice right through to bringing judicial review proceedings.

As the only university in the UK to hold a government legal aid contract, the work being undertaken by UCL through the Clinic is both unique and transformational, with far-reaching impact for students, communities across London, and beyond.



Client Case Study:

Mrs T: Community Care

Mrs T is a single parent of 3 young children and has lived in her local area for several years. Her son, Michael (5), is disabled and diagnosed with a number of learning difficulties, including autism spectrum disorder (ASD). He has limited communication skills and no danger awareness. When Ms T came to see us, she was living with her children in overcrowded and unsuitable accommodation that was not adapted to Michael's needs. He was at risk of harm in the property because it was not properly adapted, and it was difficult to care for him and meet his needs in that environment.

Ms T has no family support and social services were also not supporting Ms T or Michael. Ms T wanted the clinic to assist in getting respite care for Michael so that she could spend time with her other children, as well as help accessing more suitable accommodation for her family.

We assisted the family to access support from social services by making a referral to the local authority and then challenging the local authority through judicial review proceedings when they failed to assist the family.

Following extensive negotiation with the local authority after issuing these proceedings, the local authority eventually agreed to provide the family with more suitable accommodation and respite care for Michael. With the help of the team at UCL iLAC Ms T and her family's lives have been changed for the better.

"I remember the first time I came to the UCL clinic. I honestly didn't think things would actually happen. I didn't think we would get a house or respite. Thank you for everything. You were not just a lawyer, you supported me."

Ms T, UCL iLAC Client

Centre for Access to Justice
UCL Faculty of Laws
Bentham House
London, WC1H 0EG
T +44 (0)20 3108 8388
www.ucl.ac.uk/access-to-justice

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 @uclcaj
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“We have a serious problem
with access to justice for
ordinary citizens [...] if it
does not exist, society will
eventually start to fragment.”

Lord Neuberger, Former President of the
Supreme Court