



Working to protect your legal rights

*Empowering  
Communities*

# Annual Report 2015 - 2016

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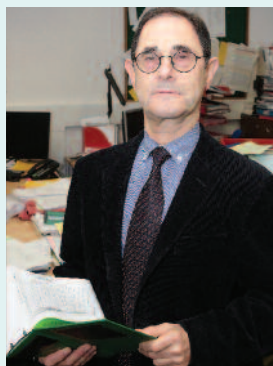
*Owned by the community • Accountable to the community • Serving the community*

# Chair's report

## Empowering communities

This is what we are about. Our clients are individuals and their families who are disadvantaged by socio-economic reasons. Derbyshire Law Centre was set up in 1989 to support them through provision of free advice, assistance and representation in social welfare law: community care, debt, employment, homelessness, housing, immigration and tackling hate and harassment.

The past year has involved us, as a not-for-profit organisation, empowering individuals, families and communities by providing them a voice to help resolve the problems that get in their way of moving on successfully in life. The cuts to legal aid and further increases in court and tribunal fees continue to make access to justice difficult for many people. I see little prospect of this climate changing in the near future. I am very proud of the work that the Law Centre has done over the year in preventing homelessness, ensuring debts are written off or reduced and people's employment rights respected.



*Cllr Michael Gordon, Chair,  
Derbyshire Law Centre's  
Management Committee.*

We also talk to key stakeholders to provide a voice to those who are not heard such as tenants, those on low pay and migrants living in Derbyshire. We have worked in partnership with key agencies to bring about positive changes for people. For example we are working closely with LINKS Council for Voluntary Service and other agencies to set up a Migrants Centre in Derbyshire that will represent up to 27 nationalities residing in the county. This will enable the public authorities and other interested stakeholders to easily consult them.

We have been successful in securing funding for specialist advice provision for refugees and their families. We are pursuing opportunities to secure funding in order to continue to provide specialist advice on hate crime. This was in response to the outcome of the EU Referendum that resulted in hundreds of calls being made by migrants and their families to Law Centres across the country about their rights to live and work in the UK. We were taken aback by the amount of hate that has been displayed towards migrant workers and their families.

With support from Chesterfield Borough Council we continue to share premises with three other advice agencies: Derbyshire Unemployed Workers' Centres (DUWC), LINKS Council for Voluntary Service and the Trade Union Safety Team (TRUST). This has proved a successful move and allows our clients to receive a more holistic service

We have further diversified income streams such as securing funding from the European Commission. These

changes are putting the Law Centre in a position to cope with future challenges and to protect its free legal services for residents across the County.

We continue to deliver free legal services from eight offices across Derbyshire, two of which are based in libraries. The branch offices could not be sustained without support from the Legal Aid Agency, Derbyshire County Council and Advice Services Transition Fund (Big Lottery Fund) as well as our local partners: Banner Jones Solicitors, VHS Fletcher Solicitors, Derbyshire Districts Citizens Advice and Amber Valley CVS.

Finally I would like to convey my thanks to Derbyshire County Council, Bolsover District Council, Chesterfield Borough Council, and North East Derbyshire District Council for their continued provision of core funding and Amber Valley Borough Council/Futures Housing Group and Derbyshire Dales District Council for their project funding, and without which, none of this is possible. My thanks also go to fellow Management Committee members and to staff and volunteers at the Law Centre for all their assistance and co-operation. It has been an extremely eventful, exciting and enjoyable year.

I have to end my review on a sad note. Earlier this year, Darren Webber passed away after a short illness. Darren had served on our management committee for many years and was treasurer for most of those. He championed the Law Centre tirelessly and represented us on the Law Centres Network National Committee. He was a fantastic colleague and will be sorely missed.

I am very proud to present this report which I hope you will find illuminating.

**Michael Gordon**

*Chair, Derbyshire Law Centre Management Committee.*

**Thank you to all the organisations that have given the Law Centre, an independent agency, financial assistance during the period 1.4.2015 – 31.3.2016.**

**Chesterfield Borough Council, Derbyshire County Council, North East Derbyshire District Council, Bolsover District Council, Derbyshire Dales District Council, Amber Valley Borough Council, Legal Aid Agency, A B Charitable Trust, Big Lottery Fund (Advice Services Transition Fund), National Lottery through the Heritage Lottery Fund, East Midlands Money Advice Partnership via Money Advice Service, Derbyshire Police and Crime Commissioner, Law Centres Network, Access to Justice, Derbyshire Dales Citizens Advice Bureau and Comic Relief.**



## An overview of the past 12 months

We entered the last financial year with some project funding streams drawing to a close and a period of some uncertainty. We have been working intensely with partners over the past year to secure significant funding for the future to sustain our work with individuals and communities who have proved particularly vulnerable. Those efforts have proved successful and we have been accepted as a partner agency on three Consortia bids for funding from the EU in both the Derbyshire / Nottinghamshire area (D2N2), and South Yorkshire. Those bids were then successful, led by Advice Nottingham, Framework and South Yorkshire Housing. These projects are due to commence delivery in the next few months, and will enable us to employ Personal Navigators to work with people facing homelessness and also debt crisis. We will also be able to employ staff to work with people with complex and multiple needs, specifically through a Community Care advice worker as well as an advocate to assist people at court. We will also be a specialist referral agency for people with employment, housing, immigration and debt problems.



*Tony McIlveen*

We have also been working hard with Derbyshire Help and Advice and LINKS CVS to secure Big Lottery funding for a project aimed at helping people in crisis. The 5 year project will work with communities where English is not their first language, who often struggle more than most in overcoming crises requiring them to engage with courts, statutory agencies and creditors, for example.

Our immigration expertise has been in demand over the last year. We are partners with a number of agencies nationally as part of the Law Centres Network EU funded project called 'Living Rights' to promote and inform EU citizens, public officials and local agencies of the rights of EU citizens living in the UK. The recent Brexit vote has meant that concerns about EU citizens' eligibility to remain in the UK have come to the fore. We have also been awarded funding to set up a Resettlement Advice



*Migrants taking part in a Living Rights session led by Tony McIlveen*

Centre for refugees across the County and hope to start work on this shortly, given the likely arrival of Syrian Refugee families to Derbyshire in the near future.

Our Hate and Harassment project, tackling Hate Crime in Derbyshire, funded by the Derbyshire Police and Crime Commissioner and Derbyshire County Council also came to an end in March. Sadly, we were unable to secure funding to continue the work and this has meant that for the first time in many years, we have no discrimination specific project at the Law Centre and sadly saw one of our valued members of staff, Sarah Roy, leave us. We are working on developing a new project to take up this important work once more.

Another area of law that we have battled to maintain this past year is our employment service. Employment advice continues to be a great area of need and an important part of our core work, but funding cuts, caused by the removal of employment advice as an area of law that attracts Legal Aid, has meant that our service has had to be reduced far more than we would wish. We have continued to offer a charged service for this work and have sought funding for employment project work from a number of sources, without success. We have also been engaging with local universities with a view to expanding the ways in which free employment advice can be delivered in Derbyshire.

Our housing team has been very busy in the last year. We represented 144 families and individuals facing possession hearings at Chesterfield County Court under the County

Court Duty Scheme that we operate. We prevented possession orders being made in 86% of cases. We are also pleased to be working with 4 councils – Chesterfield, NE Derbyshire, Bolsover and Amber Valley – who have provided us with financial assistance to offer free legal advice and representation to those facing eviction due to mortgage and rent arrears in their areas. This work has been very successful and had a financial benefit to the councils involved in reducing homelessness applications and associated costs.

Recognition must go to our volunteers who operate our Initial Assessment and Signposting Service. These are local people who give up their valuable time each week to staff our telephone lines and are the first point of contact for many of our users. They make sure that people either get an appointment to see one of our specialists, if it is one of our areas of law, or that the caller is given an effective referral to the agency that is best placed to help with their problem. Their skill and dedication is greatly appreciated by staff as well, as callers in caller satisfaction surveys.

We are pleased to report that we have been awarded the Law Centres' Network Enterprise Award for tenacity, creativity and defiant response to cuts through extending services to the people in Derbyshire.

As our new projects start delivery, we look forward to another successful and eventful year to come.

**Tony McIlveen**

*Senior Solicitor on behalf of Law Centre's staff*

## Housing

The housing advisers' work is about preventing homelessness. They also provide advice on issues of disrepair, succession, reducing rent arrears and on tenancy rights for people living in social or private rented housing.

### Case study - Mrs T's story

*Mrs T attended at the Law Centre the day before she was due to be evicted by her registered social landlord. She was being evicted due to rent arrears. After spending some time with our caseworker going through her recent history it became clear that due to depression and other medical issues, she had not been dealing with her benefit claim in relation to her rent. She had a number of items of disrepair at the property and all of this she felt impossible to deal with.*

*On taking full instructions on the disrepair it became clear that her case was quite valuable and that she would be entitled to some damages from her landlord, particularly due to the fact that she had been without heating over the winter months. The caseworker from the Law Centre made an application to the court to stop the eviction and to enter a counterclaim for the disrepair at the property. The disrepair had previously been reported to the landlord, however they had failed to carry out the repairs. The counterclaim was then made and the case settled with the defendant's arrears being wiped out in full. Therefore the threat of homelessness which had been so near was prevented by the quick action of our caseworker who used their specialist legal knowledge to make an application to the court and to start a claim for the disrepair.*



## Community Care

Practising in Community Care law covers services provided by public authorities that provide health and social care services. Our clients are disabled and older people and their parents and carers.

Derbyshire Law Centre works in partnership with Children's and Adults Social Care departments in order to make our clients' lives easier as well as more cost effective for councils, as seen in the case study.

### Case study - Mrs P's story

*Mrs P is looking after a young adult son with severe disabilities. As he gets bigger and she gets older, as she has her own health problems, he gets harder to look after. The only people the son gets along with are members of his family, most of whom live elsewhere. Mrs P saw an opportunity to exchange her tenancy with another tenant so she could live closer to her family all of whom would help her care for her son.*

*Tenancy exchanges can be refused by a landlord if the property that the family with no disabled members would be exchanging into is an adapted property, as Mrs P's is. The landlord quite properly refused the exchange.*

*The Law Centre worked in partnership with the Children's Social Care Department and obtained a Care Act Assessment and plan for the son and a Carer's Assessment for Mrs P. Following the assessments which confirmed that caring for the son would be very much easier if the exchange was allowed, Children's Social Care were persuaded to formally ask for co-operation from the council landlord under the Children Act. The exchange was then approved. This saved the Children's Social Care Department from having to expensively increase services to Mrs P and son, as the family filled the caring gap. It was a great outcome for Mrs P and her family and also an example of how different agencies can work together for the good of individual families.*

# Chesterfield County Court Duty Scheme

Our specialist housing and debt team operates a duty scheme at Chesterfield County Court providing a free representation service to people facing eviction from their rented or mortgaged homes. This is important, not only in terms of the provision of legal representation but also in providing the emotional support for clients at a very stressful time. Our legal experts work until the very last minute in exploring ways to prevent eviction.



Chesterfield County Court

## Case study - Ms B's story

*The Law Centre met with Ms B for the first time at court, where possession proceedings had been taken against her by her local authority landlord. The client suffered from severe depression and other mental health issues.*

*Allegations of antisocial behaviour had been made against her. It became apparent that the issues of antisocial behaviour were due to poor relations generally with her immediate neighbour and those poor relations had existed ever since she moved into the property.*

*The case was adjourned so that we could obtain a medical report, which showed that it was the mental health issues that caused some of the alleged behaviour. The client agreed to try new medication to manage her mental health issues and on the basis that this was tried and would prevent some of the auditory hallucinations, the local authority agreed to a suspended possession order to enable the client to have another chance at keeping her tenancy.*



# Employment Unit

Providing a free, specialist service in employment continues to be challenging. Demand for free employment advice is as high as ever, but there is much less specialist help available; Legal Aid is no longer available for employment issues (other than discrimination); and, unless they are on a low income and qualify for fees remission, claimants are charged fees of up to £1200 to take a claim in the Employment Tribunal.

As a result, whilst there is still legislation in place to protect workers, rights are hard to enforce, and the costs involved can be prohibitive.

The Law Centre continues to provide a free service as a result of funding from three main sources:

- Annual core funding from Chesterfield Borough Council, North East Derbyshire District Council, Derbyshire County Council and Bolsover District Council;
- Annual funding from Derbyshire County Council covering South Derbyshire;
- Returns from our charged-for service contribute to funding free provision.

Our charged-for service offers low-cost advice and representation in employment law.

Employment advice is a priority for the Law Centre and we continue to seek new funding so that we can maintain and develop the free service.

## Case study - Mrs D's story

*Mrs Deal had been working for a local convenience store for about six months. Whilst her contracted hours of work were 16 per week, in reality she was expected to work extra unpaid hours when the owner was unable to provide cover. As a result of additional unpaid hours worked, Mrs Deal was earning less than national minimum wage.*

*Mrs Deal wanted to raise the matter with her employer but was worried about losing her job if she did, particularly as she had worked for less than 2 years and so did not have general protection against unfair dismissal.*

*We assisted Mrs Deal in raising a written grievance with her employer alleging that the unpaid wages were a breach of the National Minimum Wage Act 1998 (as well as an unlawful deduction from wages under the Employment Rights Act 1996). This provided Mrs Deal with additional protection as, by asserting a right under an Act of Parliament (the right to be paid the national minimum wage) she was protected against unfair dismissal, regardless of her length of service.*

*Whilst the employer was unhappy at Mrs Deal's grievance, he eventually saw sense and paid her for the additional hours worked. In total, we were able to recover approximately £600 in unpaid wages over a 6 month period and Mrs Deal kept her job.*

## Debt

We continue to receive funding from the Money Advice Service, distributed and managed regionally by East Midlands Money Advice. This funding is vital as it allows us to advise anyone with a debt issue, regardless of their individual circumstances. The service is free, and we give advice by phone or in person, depending on need. We specialise in housing related debt, but can advise on any number of issues, from helping people organise their debts long term, or writing debts off, if appropriate.

We have a good working relationship with our local councils which is vital when contacting them about clients in debt with rent arrears and council tax. This year we have seen a rise in the number of people coming to the end of interest only mortgages, which were set up many years ago, and have now reached crisis point. We also see a large number of people who, through stress pay the 'wrong' debts first, often putting themselves and their families at risk of eviction. We work closely with the housing team here at the Law Centre to help our clients re-organise what to pay first.

## Case study - Sam and Laura's story...

*Sam and Laura came to see us as they were paying £200 per month to a debt management company they had found through the internet. When they set this up both of them were working, but Sam can no longer work because of ill health, so their household income has gone down. Through trying to keep up with the debt management plan payments, they were falling behind in paying their mortgage, and council tax. We told them to immediately cancel the arrangement they had with the debt management company, as they were in fact paying more in fees to this company than towards their debts, running the risk of court action being started by the mortgage company.*

*We went through a range of options with them, and told them that an alternative debt management plan could be set up without a fee, which would mean 100% of what they pay out would go towards their debts. We helped them draw up a basic financial statement, and talked them through the process, before referring them on to the charity for a long term plan to be set up.*

*As a result Sam and Laura are now paying a smaller affordable amount each month to a reputable debt management charity with no fees charged to them. They are now back on top of their mortgage and council tax payments, and feeling far less stressed about their debts. Until they came to the Law Centre they had no idea that debt management plans, under which one monthly payment is made to a company/charity, and then distributed to each creditor, could be done at no charge to them.*

## Discrimination

The effects of discrimination can be debilitating for those who are on the receiving end.

The Law Centre advises and assists people on issues relating to discrimination. An example of our work is highlighted in a recent case study that aptly demonstrates how early intervention by the Law Centre can often stop the need for formal legal proceedings and keep people in work.

### Case study - Mr M's story

*Mr M had been employed within a warehouse for 16 years. As a result of cancer, Mr M was absent from work for some time whilst he underwent extensive chemotherapy. Cancer is a condition that is automatically covered as a disability under the Equality Act 2010. Accordingly, Mr M was owed a higher duty of care as an employee.*

*During his convalescence, Mr M's employers started dismissal proceedings on the grounds of ill health.*

*Whilst the dismissal process was ongoing, we were able to obtain medical advice supporting the position that Mr M would be fit to return to work within a matter of weeks, providing he was allowed a suitable period of recuperation and a phased return when he went back to work. It was argued that the employer had taken action too early and that it would be a 'reasonable adjustment' under the Equality Act to allow Mr M the extra time needed to recover from his illness.*

*After considerable negotiation, the employer retracted dismissal proceedings and Mr M is now back at work.*

# Mortgage Repossession

Our specialism in housing law allows us to give quick and effective advice to home-owners facing potential eviction through mortgage arrears. We work constructively, often with support from our local councils, to prevent evictions wherever possible. We help clients facing urgent court action where eviction is imminent, and with longer term strategies to enable clients to keep their homes, often through effective advice on how to manage and prioritise debt. We are grateful to Chesterfield Borough, North East Derbyshire and Bolsover District Councils who fund this work through their homeless prevention funds.

## Case study - Jenny and Pete's story

*Jenny and Pete contacted us about court papers they had received from their second mortgage lender. They had two mortgages, and both were in arrears, but only the second lender had started court action so far.*

*We looked at their household income and immediately identified the need for Pete to claim PIP, as a result of his long term health issues. We were able to make an immediate referral for Pete to the Derbyshire Unemployed Workers Centre, who we share premises with, for help with this. We also went through all of Pete and Jenny's weekly and monthly expenditure, plus their income, and went through item by item where savings could be made (i.e. with cheaper broadband providers or energy deals), looked at some expenditure that could be cancelled altogether, and put payment proposals to both the mortgage lender and the second charge lender.*

*As a result of our intervention the court action was put on hold, and a payment plan was set up. Pete and Jenny have had to make sacrifices on things they previously spent money on, but they were prepared to do this to make sure the house would not be repossessed. They told us that before they came to see us at the Law Centre they had no idea that the house could be repossessed if they stopped making the second charge repayments.*

# Immigration

## Immigration advice provision

Derbyshire Law Centre continues to give specialist immigration advice over the telephone and by email. At present we do not have the resources to offer a full casework service. We are looking at ways to offer a casework and representation service, but this is subject to funding. As has been reported in previous Annual Reports, the loss of legal aid for immigration advice has ended and our ability to deliver a publicly funded casework service has been severely hit.

## Accreditation success!

Tony McIlveen, our immigration solicitor, has recently passed his re-accreditation assessments to renew his Law Society Immigration and Asylum Accreditation Scheme membership (a form of quality mark) at Level 2 Senior Caseworker and Supervisor Level. This will be an essential requirement if we are to bid for a Legal Aid contract again in immigration and asylum work in 2017/18.



## Funding success for Derbyshire Resettlement Advice Service

We are extremely pleased to have been awarded funding from A B Charitable Trust for a new specialist advice service: Derbyshire Resettlement Advice Service. This will support and integrate refugees and their families who are separated across international borders. This new service will commence from Autumn 2016 for the next 12 months.

## Living Rights

We are also a partner agency in a project being led by the Law Centres Network, funded by the EU, called 'Living Rights'. This project sets out to inform and advise EU citizens, statutory bodies and other agencies of the rights and entitlements of EU citizens living in the UK. Under the project we deliver presentations to groups and professionals as well as advice sessions to EU citizens across the East Midlands. The 2 year project started in December 2015. We have delivered talks to EU nationals as well as community forums in Derbyshire.

## Derbyshire Bilingual Crisis Buddy service

This new service funded by the Big Lottery Fund complements our specialist immigration advice service as volunteers who are bilingual are trained to become Crisis buddies to support those whose first language is not English.

# Tackling Hate and Harassment

With funding from Derbyshire Police and Crime Commissioner, we delivered a:

- County-wide reporting centre
- Free enhanced specialist advice and casework service
- Free hate & harassment telephone advice & signposting service

We enabled & supported 83 people to report incidents to the Police.

Incident type	Numbers of incidents to Police
Racial	16
Religious	3
Homophobic	19
Transgender	2
Disability	23
Other	20
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>83</b>

We provided free legal casework to 47 individuals. The casework was fairly evenly split between those motivated by race, disability and sexual orientation.

Examples of casework assistance provided are:-

- Advising and assisting a woman whose son had been beaten up after he had tried to defend her against harassment in the flats she was living in.

- Intervention in a neighbour dispute which involved a degree of harassment targeted at a disabled benefits claimant.

We advised 108 people on keeping safe from harm as well as informing them of their rights in order to tackle hate crime. Some examples are given below of the broad range of issues we have dealt with through the pre-booked call-back system:-

- A street homeless woman being harassed in a park
- A gay man being called homophobic names in Chesterfield by strangers in the street
- A woman whose car had been scratched and she thought this was linked to her neighbours, who had a problem with her using her blue badge to park in a disabled space

We represented victims of hate crime at events and meetings such as the Derbyshire Hate Crime Steering Group, Chesterfield Equality Forum and Health and Wellbeing Forum. We also find local solutions to prevent and tackle hate crime and harassment through building agencies and groups' capacity to support victims. For example we worked with Links CVS to secure free premises at our shared office space in Chesterfield for Derbyshire LGBT+ to assist LGBT victims of hate crime there, without the need for them to travel to Derby City.



## Social History project - Home for Good

A departure from the usual work of the Law Centre which has proved a great success is the Home for Good project. It was funded by the National Lottery through the Heritage Lottery Fund, and ran for just over a year – from April 2015 to the end of June 2016. The aim was to collect experiences of social housing from local residents, so that they could be set against the background of legal changes from the tenth century when the first alms houses were built up, to the present day. The project received an enthusiastic response from partners, contributors, volunteers, visitors and suppliers, and they all helped make it something we're very proud of.

We received contributions from local people in the form of oral and video history, written accounts, photographs, documents and objects. The centrepiece of the project is its website, [www.socialhousinghistory.org.uk](http://www.socialhousinghistory.org.uk), and most of the material we collected can be accessed on or through the website.



As well as the website, we developed an exhibition which travelled to events and locations around the area, culminating in a month-long stay at Chesterfield Museum.

Two versions of the final exhibition have started touring libraries in and around Chesterfield and North Eastern Derbyshire, and will continue to do so until January 2017. The schedule of dates and venues can be found in the 'News and Events' section of the website.

The material collected by the project will be held at Derbyshire Record Office, and once it has been archived there can be accessed by contacting the Record Office as well as through the website.



*46 Stubley Lane, Dronfield, 1950s*



*16 Maynard Rd, Chesterfield, today*

## Volunteers and Training

Derbyshire Law Centre continues to provide volunteering opportunities from its main office at 1 Rose Hill East. As in previous years we aim to focus on recruiting people who want to develop or update their work skills and or improve their confidence and self-esteem. However, this year we had a number of retirees apply and with no funding restrictions in place they have made a welcome addition to the assessment team.

In September 2015 we recruited six new volunteers, with all six completing the classroom based training and going on to join the existing team of four. We now routinely have at least two volunteers on most days providing the diagnostic assessment process to all new enquiries to the Law Centre. The session supervisor continues to provide references for current and past volunteers applying for work. We take this opportunity to say a big thank you to all the volunteers who have volunteered over the last year.

### Volunteers (Past and present 2013-2014)

Carol Davis	Jerin John
Vanessa Edwards	Tim Mak
Katie France	Jewels Orton
Nancy Fox	Nadine Trythall
Noelle Hall	Isabel Wade

As a Law Centre we continue to seek funding to develop and expand the volunteering opportunities we provide. In the meantime Derbyshire Law Centre continues to show its commitments to volunteers by internally funding the project.



*Volunteers Assessment team*

## Volunteer Spotlight on: Noelle Hall

Noelle approached the Law Centre after she was made redundant by the organisation where she had worked for over 19 years. Although the organisation was within the advice sector, she described her role on her application form as 'a back room' role. She hoped volunteering at the Law Centre would provide her with some 'front office' experience.

Following her redundancy, Noelle decided to move permanently back to Chesterfield and away from where her previous role was located. Although she knew some people in the area, her volunteering role allowed her to meet new people and make new friends.

Although Noelle is an experienced administrator her confidence had been knocked following a number of job rejections. She has applied for over 200 jobs and has attended a number of interviews only to be told she

came second. Noelle is realistic and accepts her age probably goes against her, but her confidence is knocked each time it is a no. When asked why she volunteers, her response was that it gives her time out from thinking about having to look for paid work and provides her with some perspective on life, as many of the callers are in a worse situation. She also finds the role very interesting as no week is ever the same.

Over time, with guidance and support from the session supervisor and other volunteers, Noelle has developed her diagnostic interview skills and is becoming more confident when assessing a client's needs. She is even coming to terms with the centre's database!! Noelle herself says, 'one of the benefits of volunteering at the Law Centre is that it has reaffirmed that I am a good worker and get on with people'.

Recently, she has secured and started a part time job which she hopes will lead on to more paid work, even if that means she eventually has to leave the Law Centre in the end.

## Comments and feedback

Clients who have received a casework service are sent a feedback questionnaire. This year 91 questionnaires have been returned. Of those returned 68% indicated their stress and anxiety had reduced, 33% indicated they had settled or stayed in their home and 16% had stayed in their work due to the advice and service they had received.

## Complaints

The number of complaints regarding the service we provide remains the same, with 2 received this year. Both were investigated in line with our policy and resolved within a number of weeks. One complaint was in relation to an oversight by staff in relation to the equal access of our service, steps have been taken to prevent this from re-occurring.

## Comments

- Just a heartfelt thank you
- Thanks for help, v much appreciated
- Would like to thank everyone & adviser for help
- A thousand thank yous
- Very good service, needs more advertising
- I would like to thank Ellen for all the help
- Without Sue's help I wouldn't be here today!
- Very happy to keep my flat.
- A big thank you, very professional service felt supported not judged or patronised
- Would recommend to friends and family
- Thank you so much, much appreciated your help
- I'm very grateful for the help I received
- A speedy solution to a problem I thought it would never end
- Tremendously helpful, excellent service
- Helped us manage our budget, very helpful and understanding
- Always felt more positive and happier after speaking to Sue
- I am more confident in seeking advice against tough oppositions such as the council, if I didn't then my family would be homeless. Thank you for your support Steve.
- I felt there was too many variables and did not proceed
- Very friendly down to earth advice
- All staff very helpful and information
- Client dissatisfied but with council rules rather than the Law Centre
- Massive thank you to you for all you have done for me in fighting my corner with my ex bosses. Your time has meant so much to me and it is very much appreciated.

# Company Information - List of Directors 2015/2016

Michael Gordon	Chair	North East Derbyshire District Council
Mary Honeyben	Vice Chair	Derby and District Law Society
Alan Craw	Secretary	Chesterfield Liberal Democrats
Darren Webber	Treasurer	Individual member (Deceased 4.7.2016)
Councillor Sharon Blank		Derbyshire County Council
Councillor Howard Borrell		Chesterfield Borough Council
Chris Collard		Individual member
Councillor Mary Dooley		Bolsover District Council (from 23.7.2015)
John Duncan		Age Concern Chesterfield and District
Councillor Stuart Ellis		Derbyshire County Council (until 11.4.2016)
Councillor Jenny Flood		Chesterfield Borough Council
Councillor Tricia Gilby		Derbyshire County Council (from 17.5.2016)
Colin Hampton		Derbyshire Unemployed Workers' Centres
Councillor Carl Harper		Eckington Parish Council
John Morehen		Staveley Seniors
Councillor Kathryn Salt MBE		Tibshelf Parish Council (from 18.11.2015)
David Shaw		Chesterfield Citizens Advice Bureau
Councillor Derrick Skinner		North East Derbyshire District Council
Chloe Small		Individual member
Marion Thorpe		Touchstone Community Development Ltd (from 28.1.2016)
		Individual member (until 18.11.2015)
Councillor Elaine Tidd		Staveley Town Council
Jumoke Tuwuru		Chesterfield African Caribbean Community Association
Sarah White		Individual member (from 28.1.2016)



The Law Centre is a company limited by guarantee:  
2453081

Registered Charity No:  
702419

Solicitors Regulation  
Authority:  
Practice No 71302

Auditors:  
Barber Harrison & Platt,  
57-59 Saltergate,  
Chesterfield, S40 1UL

Bankers:  
Lloyds TSB, 30 Rose Hill,  
Chesterfield, S40 1LR

# Who do we help?

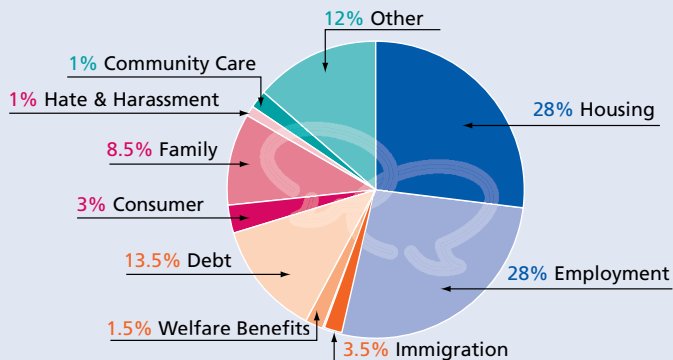
The Law Centre is open 35 hours a week. Most people's first contact is by telephone, although an increasing number of people contact us by email via our website as well as by text, phone and in person.

How many people have we assisted during the year?

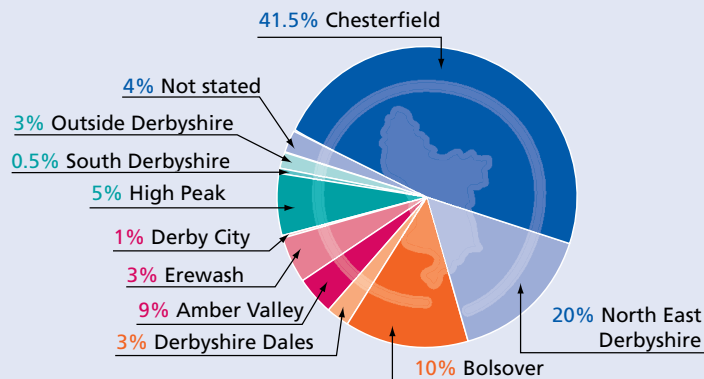
**During 2015/16, we have:**

- Advised 4415 callers
- Assisted 1097 clients on complex cases
- Received 639 referrals from other agencies.

**Initial legal advice relates to:**



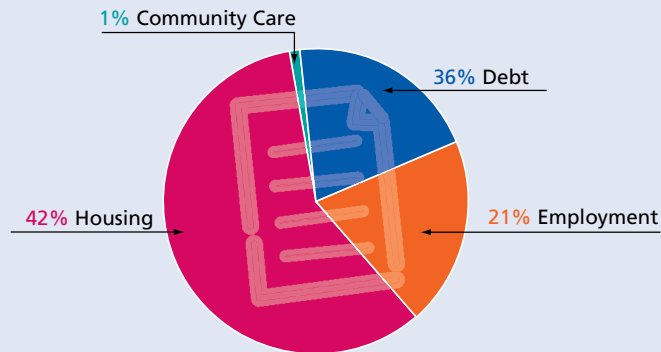
**- Where do our enquiries come from?**



## The Specialist Casework Service

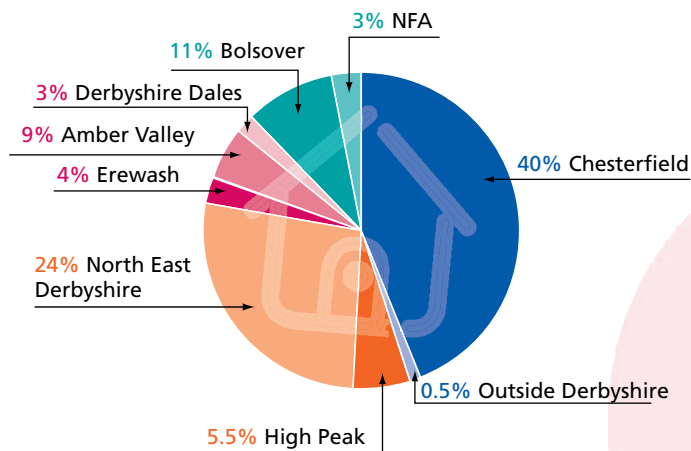
1097 complex cases assisted on during this period

**- Type of cases**





## - Where do our casework clients live?



## - Profile of casework clients

19% of clients identified themselves having a disability or long term health condition.

6% defined themselves as BME - Black or from another Ethnic Minority group.

55.5% of our clients are female.

## - Age of our clients

8% are under 24 years of age

66% are between the ages of 25 and 50

26% are older people (Age UK's definition)

## Outcomes achieved for clients

For our clients we have:

- Concluded 82.5% of all cases successfully
- Secured award/compensation for 70% of our employment clients.
- Prevented eviction for 87.5% of all clients that we have represented at county court duty scheme.
- Prevented homelessness for nearly 96% of tenants and mortgagees of those we have represented.
- 100% of the families with mortgages who received representation and after-court work were not made homeless.
- Secured accommodation for 49 homeless clients with no fixed abode.

## Financial Review

2015/16 proved to be a steady year in financial terms. Our unrestricted work raised a small surplus of £2,139. However, a deficit of £6,454 on restricted funds meant that overall, there was a deficit of £4,315. Restricted funds were intentionally overspent to use funds that had been carried forward from the previous accounting year. The surplus in our unrestricted fund has been allocated to our designated funds.

Our priority is to maintain our core specialist legal advice service (in housing, debt, community care, employment and immigration) to the most vulnerable communities in Derbyshire. Core funding is absolutely key to maintaining this. Core funding enables the Law Centre to attract other funds, mainly through contracts and projects.

Our Financial Strategy has been supported by a very active Funding Strategy during the year. Our organisation has worked hard on attracting new funds, especially by working in partnership with other advice agencies to take advantage of new European Funds through D2N2 and Sheffield City Region.

2015/16 saw the end of Advice Services Transition Funding. This had been used to help some core services (particularly employment) to continue after the loss of Legal Aid Agency funding. Our charged service, whilst small, is beginning to pick up a little momentum and supports the retention of our employment service.

After 10 years, we had to close our Hate Crime service as funding ceased. This led to a staff redundancy which was upsetting for all concerned. We would like to wish Sarah Roy the best of futures.

Our Legal Aid Agency (LAA) contracts perform well, although we continue to suffer from clients missing appointments. LAA only funds some of our housing work. Our housing specialists also provide additional housing support through our County Court work and mortgage repossession advice, funded by local authorities through core grant and Homelessness funds.

Our work on the Money Advice Service project (EMMA), continues apace. The contract funding was temporarily increased which gave the organisation additional funds to provide more services around Debt.

A real highlight for the organisation was the project, supported by the National Lottery through the Heritage Lottery Fund, called "Home 4 Good". This allowed the Law Centre to explore our education aim more than we have ever done. We were able to work with new partners, such as Derbyshire Libraries to explore the history and heritage of social housing through oral history, photographs and written accounts contributed by local people. There are hopes for more development in this type of area.

As always, we are grateful to all the organisations that fund our services, both directly and indirectly.

The continued support from Chesterfield Borough Council, Derbyshire County Council, Bolsover District Council and North East Derbyshire District Council, despite austerity measures, is essential for the survival of our organisation as they provide core grants. This then enables the Law Centre to retain high quality staff, providing an excellent service, and to attract/retain other funding. Thanks also to:

- The Big Lottery
- Comic Relief
- Money Advice Service
- Legal Aid Agency

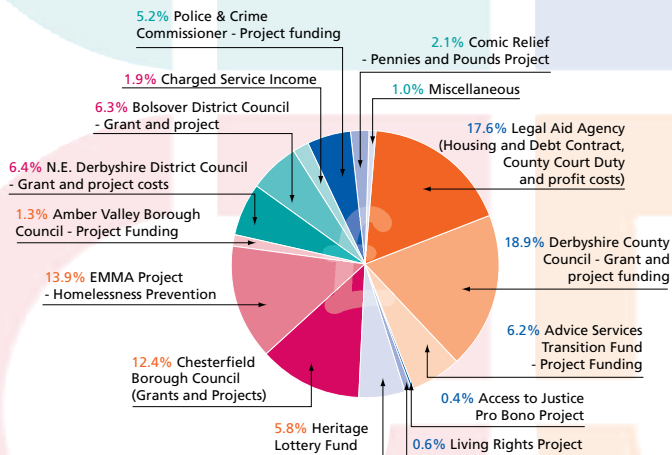
Thanks to Banner Jones Solicitors, Ripley CVS, Derbyshire Districts CAB and Derbyshire County Council for allowing us to have offices in their premises.

We are also grateful for donations. In 2015/16, the Law Centre set up PayPal accounts and Donations pages to encourage donations. You can find our donations page at [www.mydonate.bt.com/charities/derbyshirelawcentre](http://www.mydonate.bt.com/charities/derbyshirelawcentre). Donations are also accepted through our Facebook page. Gift-Aiding increases the value of donations.

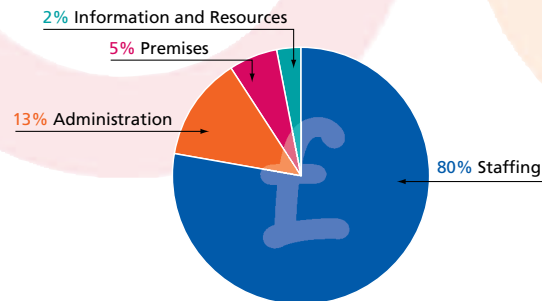
**John Duncan**  
Acting Treasurer

## Income and expenditure

### Total Income 2015/2016



### How we spend our money



## Individual Members

Keith Brown	Catherine Muyunda
Alan Craw	Jackie Norris
Chris Collard	Martin O'Kane
Andrew Cross	Cameron Philpott
Rachel Driver	Enid Robinson
David Eccles	Hazel Rotherham
Graham Fairs	Chloe Small
Patricia Gilby	Y. Sorefan
Councillor Terry Gilby	Reginald Tandy
Mark Grayling	Marion Thorpe
Mike Greenhalf	Margaret Vallins
Linda James	Tom Vallins
Genet Morley	Alison Westray-Chapman
Kevin Morley	Sarah White
Dennis Mullings	



## Organisational Members

50+ Inspired Group  
African Caribbean Community Association  
Age UK - Derby & Derbyshire  
Age Concern (Chesterfield & District)  
Aldecar and Langley Mill Parish Council  
Asian Association  
Ault Hucknall Parish Council  
Baha'i Faith Community  
Bamford with Thornhill Parish Council  
Belper Town Council  
Bradwell Parish Council  
Bretby Parish Council  
Brimington Disabled Club  
Brimington Parish Council  
Burnaston Parish Council  
Chesterfield Ability  
Chesterfield and North East Derbyshire  
Cruse Bereavement Care  
Chesterfield and North East Derbyshire  
Pensioners Action Group  
Chesterfield (Town Centre) Children's Centre  
Chesterfield Citizens Advice Bureau  
Chesterfield Constituency Labour Party

Chesterfield Liberal Democrats  
Chesterfield Muslim Association  
Chesterfield Tinnitus Support Group  
Chesterfield Volunteer Centre  
Clay Cross Parish Council  
Community Mental Health Team -  
Chesterfield  
Cross Counties Development Trust  
Deaf & Hearing Support -  
Chesterfield  
Derby & District Law Society  
Derby Alcohol Advice Service  
Derbyshire Coalition for Inclusive  
Living  
Derbyshire Districts Citizens Advice  
Bureau  
Derbyshire Gypsy Liaison Group  
Derbyshire Unemployed Workers  
Centres  
Dronfield Baha'is  
Eckington and District Pensioners  
Action Group  
Eckington Parish Council  
Elmton with Creswell Parish Council  
Friends of Poolsbrook Country Park  
Grassmoor, Hasland and Winsick  
Parish Council  
Guinness Northern Counties

Housing Association  
Hartington Upper Quarter Parish  
Council  
Heanor and Loscoe Town Council  
Heath and Holmewood Parish  
Council  
Heath Properties Tenants  
Association  
Hulland Ward Parish Council  
LINKS Council for Voluntary Service  
Matlock Town Council  
Middleton Parish Council  
Muslim Welfare Association  
North Derbyshire Community Drug  
Team  
North Derbyshire Domestic Violence  
Action Group  
North Derbyshire Forum for Mental  
Health Carers  
North Derbyshire Women's Aid  
North East Derbyshire District  
Labour Party  
Old Bolsover Town Council  
Our Vision Our Future  
Overseal Parish Council  
Relate Chesterfield  
Rural Action Derbyshire  
SAIL

Sanctuary Carr-Gomm Society -  
Chesterfield  
Shirland and Higham Parish Council  
Sight Support Derbyshire  
SPODA  
Staveley Seniors Forum  
Staveley Town Council  
Stenson Fields Parish Council  
Stonham Housing Association  
Tibshelf Parish Council  
Tontine Road Carers Support Group  
Touchstone Community  
Development Ltd  
TRUST  
Union of Shops, Distributive and  
Allied Workers (Chesterfield)  
Unison - Chesterfield Borough  
Council  
Unison - North East Derbyshire  
District Council  
Unit 10  
Unstone Parish Council  
Whitwell Parish Council  
Wingerworth Parish Council  
Winster Parish Council  
Wirksworth Parish Council

# Staff List 2016

Sue Allard  
Wendy Bell  
Sharon Challands

Fran Cole  
Jane Crossland  
Lisa Haythorne

Lorraine Mellors  
Tony McIlveen

Advice worker (Debt and Housing)  
(Administrator – Reception)  
Co-ordinator (Office and  
Resources)  
Administrator  
Administrator  
Solicitor (Housing, Debt,  
Discrimination and Specialist  
Quality Mark Manager)  
Administrator  
Senior Solicitor (Employment  
& Immigration)

Andrew Montgomery Advice worker (Housing and  
Employment)  
Sarah Roy Project worker (Hate and  
Harassment - left March 2016)  
Ellen Taylor Advice worker (Employment) and  
Project worker  
Steve Taylor Advice worker (Community Care  
and Housing)  
Nikki Tugby Co-ordinator (Front of House).  
Teresa Waldron Co-ordinator (Partnerships,  
Projects and Social Policy)





## Darren Lloyd Webber 1967 - 2016

In July this year Darren passed away after battling with serious illness. He had been a management committee member for more than 16 years, being treasurer for many of those years. He was an invaluable member, working tirelessly on numerous projects and sub-committees on behalf of the law centre. We could always count on his help and advice. Darren also was a Management Committee representative on the Law Centres Network Executive Committee.

Darren was a great believer in standing up for what was right and helping people in need and we were all very fortunate to have known him and to have him as such a committed supporter. He gave up so much of his time to help both us and the Law Centre movement generally. He is sadly missed by us and we offer our condolences to his family and loved ones.



## Main office:

Derbyshire Law Centre,  
1 Rose Hill East,  
Chesterfield,  
Derbyshire, S40 1NU



01246 550674 Text Box: 0845 833 4252



[dlc@derbyshirelawcentre.org.uk](mailto:dlc@derbyshirelawcentre.org.uk)



[www.derbyshirelawcentre.org.uk](http://www.derbyshirelawcentre.org.uk)



@DerbyshireLC

## Branch offices *(Services offered at branches vary according to funding)*

### Bolsover

Bolsover Library, Church Street, Bolsover,  
Derbyshire, S44 6HB

### Buxton

In the office of Derbyshire Districts Citizens Advice  
Bureau, 26 Spring Gardens, Buxton, SK17 6DE

### Chesterfield

In the offices of VHS Fletchers Solicitors/Banner Jones  
Solicitors, 2 Marsden Street, Chesterfield, S40 1JY

### Ilkeston

In the office of Derbyshire Districts Citizens Advice,  
Albion Leisure Centre, East Street,  
Ilkeston, DE7 5JB

### Ripley

In the office of Amber Valley CVS,  
33 Market Place, Ripley, Derbyshire, DE5 3HA

### Staveley

Staveley Library, Hall Lane, Staveley,  
Chesterfield, S43 3TP