

**Derbyshire
Law Centre**

Working to protect your legal rights



*Protecting your
legal rights in a
changing world*

**Annual Report
2019 -2020**

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Our Mission

Derbyshire Law Centre's mission is to increase access to justice for disadvantaged communities through the provision of quality assured, accessible, free and low cost legal advice, information and representation to individuals and groups across our geographical area.

We do this through:

- Increasing provision of quality assured specialist legal advice and representation in the following areas of social welfare law: housing and homelessness, employment, debt, community care, immigration and discrimination;
- Undertaking project work in line with our mission statement as funding becomes available;
- Providing an accessible initial assessment and signposting service to all enquirers;
- Increasing and diversifying the financial and other resources of the Law Centre to ensure its future sustainability, by positive partnership working and engagement with existing and potential funders;
- Extending awareness of the rights and remedies available to individuals and communities and the work of the Law Centre through information and publicity;
- Ensuring that the Law Centre has well-trained staff to deliver quality services and well-trained trustees to ensure good governance.



Clare Lodder, Chief Executive, Citizens Advice Sheffield, speaking at our Annual General Meeting, November 2019. Clare was one of the initial workers and heavily involved in the setting up of the Law Centre over 30 years ago.

“The ethos of the Law Centre – designed to give people the confidence to understand that they have legal rights (not charity) and have the means to enforce them – this is empowering for communities – this gets results and makes a difference to people’s lives – I genuinely believe that your communities are stronger and more resilient because in this area there is a Law Centre to turn to.”

Welcome to our review of the year 2019 - 2020

The events of the past 12 months have been extraordinary. When we met at our last AGM, life was completely different from now. Derbyshire Law Centre, during lockdown and after, continues to help and advise clients.

The effects of losing employment as a result of the contracting economy, here and worldwide, has led to increasing mental health concerns. Although the Government's welcome furlough scheme and freezing of evictions has protected people, this is now coming to an end. It is now expected that there will be an increase in people experiencing debt and unemployment.

As a result, there will be an ever-growing need for Law Centres to help the vulnerable in our society. Our staff and volunteers have worked tirelessly to provide advice and assistance throughout the pandemic and are prepared for the challenges which the future will bring.

My thanks to all our staff and volunteers, their commitment is deeply appreciated.



Michael Gordon
Chair of the Management Committee

Lastly, I would like to thank our funders and all the organisations that have given us financial assistance during the period 1.4.2019- 31.3.2020. Without their help and continued support, the vital work of Derbyshire Law Centre could not take place.

List of organisations that have given us financial assistance during the period 1.4.2019 – 31.3.2020.

- Chesterfield Borough Council
- Derbyshire County Council
- North East Derbyshire District Council
- Bolsover District Council
- Amber Valley Borough Council
- Big Lottery Fund
- European Commission
- Money and Pensions Service
- Legal Aid Agency
- Legal Education Foundation (Justice First Fellowship and Just in Time project)
- European Social Fund and National Lottery (The Opportunity and Change project and Money Sorted project).



Senior Solicitor's Report

It is worth remembering that the 12-month period for this report is to 1st September 2020. Half of the year covering the period of this report was unaffected by Covid-19, but it is the last half that defines it.

Before the 'lockdown' we were well on our way to achieving our business plans for the year. We started new projects, secured further funding for ongoing projects and took on new staff in important areas. We took on a lease of new premises in Chesterfield to cope with our new expansion. Our first Justice First Fellow, funded by the Legal Education Foundation qualified as a solicitor and took up work with us in our Employment and Immigration Units.

Our new trainee solicitor, funded by the Law Society Diversity Access Scheme started in September 2019. One member of staff was arranging her return following her maternity leave. We had been shortlisted and attended the Awards ceremony for the national Law Society Excellence awards, where we had been nominated in two categories (we didn't win unfortunately). Looking back, we had a lot to be proud of.

Like many organisations, come March, we had to think and plan quickly as the Covid-19 situation developed. We were quick to have a plan in place for when the levels of risk changed. In fact, we moved from low risk precautions to a closing of the service to personal callers, to everyone working from home in what seemed to be the blink of an eye.

I can say that the organisation managed this extremely well and we were able to move smoothly to enable staff to work at home almost from day one, with transferred telephone lines over the internet, our receptionist answering our phone as normal, but from home, laptops purchased and enabled for remote access to our network server to enable staff to access their files from home.



Tony McIlveen
Senior Solicitor

We arranged for staff to travel around collecting and delivering important documents that could not be scanned and emailed. I'll admit that we had a bit of fun getting used to Microsoft Teams and Zoom meetings, but soon got the hang of it.

Our Management Committee and sub committees continued to meet via Zoom. The reality was that we continued to be as busy as ever, more so in the case of employment enquires, as might be expected. We only had to furlough one member of staff, and that was only for 2 weeks as the anticipated fall off in demand for housing advice following the suspension of court possession proceedings did not materialise.

As an aside, it was very depressing to hear about the continued unlawful evictions that were attempted over lockdown that we were continually called upon to remedy.

One of the highlights for staff and volunteers was our weekly Zoom quiz. Matthew, our trainee solicitor, was so good at setting questions and being quiz master that he took it on as a regular event and became our own Bradley Walsh (The Chase).

Our staff were naturally nervous about returning to the office, but we made a collective decision to re-open as best we could for people to come and see us. We made our offices safe and put in place procedures to ensure that people could be seen safely. We had planned to open in July, but the guidance was not there yet, and so we opened again in August with a mixture of staff working from home and at the office. We were also able to welcome back one volunteer. But, I get ahead of myself and the rest of the story will have to wait until next year.

I would like to pay tribute and say thank you to our many funders, both local and national, who have stood by us and supported us even more than ever this year, recognising both that we could have been at risk of financial crisis and that our services were needed more than ever.

Whilst this sums up our year in a nutshell, most importantly, I would like to take this opportunity to ask the whole organisation, staff, volunteers and Management Committee to take a collective bow in recognition of the fantastic work, team spirit and collective feeling of responsibility to our communities, to ensure that throughout this difficult time we were able to continue to offer a service and support the people we are all here to help.

Employment Unit Report

The period since March 2020 has been an exceptionally busy time for the Employment Unit. Throughout the Covid-19 crisis we have worked remotely, providing our full service as well as dealing with a large increase in employment enquiries relating to furlough and Covid-19.

As well as the Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme (CJRS) which made provision for furlough, Covid-19 affected issues such as health and safety at work, childcare, sick leave and pay, unpaid wages, holiday, redundancy, lay-off, dismissal and discrimination. We worked hard to keep up to date with the rapidly changing and complex government regulations so that we could advise clients effectively.

In June we were awarded a grant by the Alex Ferry Foundation which enabled our paralegal to gather information about the changes to the law and provide an 'FAQ' section on our website.

Between August 2019 and August 2020:

- We dealt with just over half the total enquiries to the Law Centre from March 2020 to July 2020.
- Between 23 March and 15 May 2020 employment enquiries increased by more than 10%.
- We worked remotely and provided a full service.
- We extended the contracts of our paralegal and solicitor, and employed a new caseworker.
- We continued to deliver the Just in Time project, funded by Derbyshire Public Health and Legal Education Foundation, for rapid referrals for employment advice from health agencies.

Our ambitions for 2020-21 are to:

- Help as many clients as we can in dealing with employment issues, particularly those arising from the coronavirus crisis.
- Continue to deliver a Legal Aid contract in discrimination, offering free advice and assistance to people experiencing discrimination in employment.
- Find new funding to enable us to continue helping an increased number of clients as the situation regarding coronavirus develops.

Case study

Mrs MH was due to return to work after a lengthy period of sick leave caused by a serious mental health condition. We helped her make a flexible working request. When lockdown came, she was about to return to work, but childcare commitments prevented it.

We requested that she be furloughed pending a decision on the flexible working request. This was agreed. The flexible working request was granted, but our client continued to be furloughed so she could care for her children. This protected the family income and reduced our client's stress, improving her mental health.

"The help and advice I received from AM was exemplary. He gave me support and advice to fight my claim"

Discrimination Unit Report

Despite funding restrictions, we have always prided ourselves on being able to offer specialist advice in discrimination matters, focusing on the areas of employment, housing and access to goods and services. From September 2019, the government decided to reinstate legal aid in this important area of law and awarded the Law Centre a new contract. This means that we can now provide a full casework service in discrimination for clients who are eligible under our contract with the Legal Aid Agency. Here is a flavour of some of the work we have carried out over the last 12 months, which, as with much of our current work, is Covid-19 related:

Case study

Mr PW worked in the hospitality industry. As a result of the Covid-19 pandemic, the business temporarily shut its doors from March 2020 and he was made redundant after only 7 months' service. All other staff in the client's department were furloughed. Our client was in his 60s and considerably older than all other staff – he believed that the real reason he was selected for redundancy was because of his age.

We immediately contacted the employer to raise concerns that we believed our client had been unfairly selected on the grounds of age, making the decision discriminatory. After considerable negotiation, our client was reinstated, paid all money owed for the period he was out of work and placed on furlough with all other staff.

Case study

Mrs HA is a single mum with three young children. She works full time and after a recent period of maternity leave, made a request to return to work on part-time hours to accommodate her child-care needs. Her request was initially turned down by her employer on the grounds that the business required her to work full-time, but with our involvement, the employer reconsidered and allowed a return on part time hours.

Shortly after the change in hours took place, the client was furloughed as a result of Covid-19 and subsequent downturn in work. The client's place of work re-opened in early May and she was recalled to work. Unfortunately, as a single mum and lack of outside childcare due to lockdown, the client was unable to return. We assisted the client in negotiations with her employer, making it clear that those with childcare needs could continue to be furloughed. The employer agreed to a further period of furlough.

*“Very helpful thank you.
The adviser was very considerate
of me feeling a bit emotional as
well due to my case.”*

Housing Unit Report

This year has seen further expansion with a new housing solicitor and new projects as well as a new way of working. Finding ways to help and assist tenants and working to prevent homelessness has been particularly challenging during the last few months but we are proud of the work and service that we continue to provide. At the heart of our success is the way that our case workers are able to work with our paralegals and housing project workers to secure good outcomes for tenants.

During the lockdown many landlords have been frustrated that they have been unable to take tenants to court for evictions. Many have decided to take matters into their own hands and have unlawfully evicted their tenants. We have been contacted by many clients who have been unlawfully evicted or harassed by their landlords. At Derbyshire Law Centre, we have the legal expertise and qualified staff to be able to take cases to court to stop harassment and apply for an injunction to get people back into their homes after they have been evicted.

Despite the country being in lockdown over the last six months our housing team have been very active at Court. Our team have been successful in applying for injunctions to ensure re-entry to properties to tenants who have been unlawfully evicted. One client we advised, Mr HT, was unlawfully evicted 3 times in 3 months. The unlawful eviction was late on a Friday evening when the landlord changed the locks of the property with all of the client's belongings still inside, including the client's medication. Mr HT had no choice but to sleep in a tent. This was at the height of lockdown when facilities were limited.

Lisa, an experienced housing solicitor was instructed by the client. She wrote to the landlord outlining his obligations as a landlord and his further legal duties under the Prevention of Eviction Act 1977. This letter explained to the landlord that to evict someone without a Court order was a criminal offence which could lead to prosecution. The letter also stated that if he did not allow Mr HT access to his property an injunction application would be made and that Mr HT would be able to apply for damages. The landlord did not allow access therefore an injunction application was drafted with our housing paralegal, Diya, working late into the night, preparing documents for Court, from home. This work ensured that the client could access justice and enforce his legal rights. There was a

telephone hearing during which a District Judge heard arguments and issued the injunction ordering the landlord to allow Mr HT access to his property.

Sadly, the landlord decided that he would breach that injunction order and did not provide Mr HT with keys to get back into the property. Lisa therefore went to meet the client on a Saturday afternoon whilst socially distanced in his sister's garden. Lisa then contacted Chesterfield Borough Council housing options manager that same day who arranged B&B accommodation for that night. Lisa contacted the landlord and informed him that she would be making an application to the Court to commit the landlord to prison for breaching the injunction. He could have faced a 2 year prison term for contempt of Court. The landlord then arranged to get a set of keys to the client who was able to return to his home on the Sunday.

Whilst Mr HT was locked out of his property he had to buy takeaway food as he had no access to cooking facilities. This was very expensive and meant he did not have money to buy food once back in his property. Gary, our homeless prevention paralegal applied to the Vicars' Relief Fund and obtained a £150 Tesco voucher to enable the client to do some shopping. We also provided information to Chesterfield Borough Council who have the power to prosecute a landlord for unlawful eviction.

Another client we advised during lockdown, Mr SY, a resident of Amber Valley, was the victim of cuckooing. His flat had been taken over by "friends" who manipulated and threatened him into allowing unlawful activity to take place at his property. Things came to a head when he was severely beaten by the man who had taken over his flat. Our team jumped into action to help him. The client told us that he had family outside of Derbyshire and he wanted to leave the county to be closer to them. His social worker had tried to help him move without any success. Our team tried to make a homeless application with the



council where his family lived. The council refused to accept his application. The matter was passed to Lisa who provided comprehensive legal advice on his rights to make a homeless application and on the duties of the council to accept the application. Lisa communicated with the council to try and outline their legal responsibility but the council was steadfast in its refusal to accept the application. Lisa tried every approach to make the council act lawfully and take the homeless application. The last resort was to apply for a Judicial Review of the decision to refuse to take the application. Lisa sent a Letter before Action which resulted in the council accepting the application and placing the very vulnerable client in temporary accommodation. Due to our intervention in helping the client the police informed us that moving Mr SY would disrupt a large drug supply from over the county border. Diya attended at the council offices and completed a witness statement with the help of council officers and the police. Kevin, one of our homeless prevention workers was able to arrange B&B accommodation out of the county to make sure the client was safe. Kevin also arranged transport to the new council.

These 2 case studies show how well the housing team work with other agencies and local councils to provide a holistic service to clients.

Chesterfield County Court Duty Scheme

We have operated the County Court Duty Scheme at Chesterfield County Court since it started in 2005.

Many of those facing possession proceedings are not able to afford to instruct a solicitor to represent them to keep a roof over their heads and prevent them from becoming homeless. They attend Chesterfield County Court on their own to face a Judge who will determine whether or not they can stay in their property. The County Court Duty Scheme allows Derbyshire Law Centre to attend Chesterfield County Court, on days when possession lists are to be heard, and offer advice and representation to all that need it. It is crucial that those facing possession proceedings get expert legal advice at this point. With our intervention, we can ensure that possession orders are not made in most cases and even ask the Judge to delay making an order in others so that we can work with the client to try to rectify the issues at hand. Adjournments allow us to fully advise clients and work holistically with them, through internal and external referrals, to tackle underlying problems such as employment issues, problems



with benefits, health issues and debts which are often the root cause as to why they are now facing possession proceedings.

Without this continued presence at Chesterfield County Court through the Duty Scheme, we would not be able to assist with key intervention work and keep a roof over the heads of the vast majority of tenants and their families that we advise. We are in a very lucky position that the court duty scheme work is also funded by our local authorities which enables us to work with the clients in more depth than the limited duty scheme funding.

Due to the Coronavirus pandemic, possession proceedings were stayed for a period of ninety days from 27 March 2020 to 24 June 2020. A further two extensions to this stay were announced with the current position being that it ends on 20 September 2020. Due to our good working relationships with our partners, we have been involved in regular meetings with the Judiciary, Chesterfield County Court staff, other firms and local authority landlords regarding the return of possession proceedings. With new measures coming into force, including reactivation notices and two different types of hearings being listed, Review and Substantive, as well as a backlog of cases and new cases to be issued, we are envisaging our Duty Scheme will be inundated with tenants needing our help. We will be ready for those that need our help the most in these challenging times.

Homelessness Reduction Act

Now in its second year this project, funded by Chesterfield Borough Council, NE Derbyshire District Council and Bolsover District Council, enables us to help those we are not able to help under the terms of our Legal Aid contract. The project funds a full time homelessness prevention paralegal and a Housing solicitor for 1 day a week.

Since the start of lockdown we have had a number of clients who have needed extra help due to the difficult times. There have been a number of charities who have either upped their limits on a single grant or who have opened new emergency grants. In addition, local authorities have been very generous and understanding that these are unprecedented times for clients.

Since lockdown our homelessness prevention paralegal has secured £19,672.61 for clients. This has come from Discretionary Housing Payments, Homeless Prevention funds and charities. We have also had a number of clients who have benefited from the Vicars' Relief Fund's emergency grants.

One client was unlawfully evicted and was street homeless but Gary successfully applied for £1150.00, £1000.00 to help clear his rent arrears and £150.00 to purchase supermarket vouchers to enable him to buy basic necessities).

Another client, who was street homeless, was offered permanent accommodation with the local authority but did not have any belongings. We were able to secure him £260.00 which paid for items such as a duvet, towels and crockery. We also applied to a homeless prevention fund to purchase him a microwave, thus ensuring he could care for himself and maintain his tenancy.



Private Rented Sector Project

In May 2019 we began The Private Rented Sector Project with funding from the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government, in partnership with 11 different local councils (Amber Valley Borough Council, Bolsover District Council, Broxtowe Borough Council, Chesterfield Borough Council, Derbyshire Dales District Council, Erewash Borough Council, Gedling Borough Council, High Peak Borough Council, North East Derbyshire District Council, South Derbyshire District Council, and Staffordshire Moorlands District Council) and the new specialist landlord support service 'Call B4 You Serve' (delivered by Decent and Safe Homes).

The project took a preventative approach to homelessness, which allowed us to work with tenants in the private rented sector before notices had even been served. Relatively small interventions had a huge impact saving a lot of money and stress for all parties further down the line.

The project, which involved giving one-to-one support to tenants who were struggling to maintain their private rented tenancies, was hugely successful and in the period 20.5.19 to 31.5.20 achieved the following:



The project came to an end at the end of May 2020 but we are pleased that it has been replaced with the Homelessness Prevention Project. This is a positive step because it means we're able to give more support to social tenants.

Homelessness Prevention Project

Following the success of the PRS (Private Rented Sector) project we are delighted that the five local authorities (Amber Valley Borough Council, Bolsover District Council, Chesterfield Borough Council, North East Derbyshire District Council, Derbyshire Dales District Council) have decided to fund us to deliver this new project which now covers social tenants as well as private tenants, enabling us to help and assist even more people facing difficulties with their tenancies.

Case study

View from a homeless prevention worker

Working with the Community Safety Team at Amber Valley Borough Council I was asked if I could assist with a client that was in Private social housing who had mental health issues. The company who owned the block of flats wanted to carry out refurbishment of the property but the client was refusing to engage with them. I spoke to the client's mental health worker and visited the client with him however he refused to answer the door. A few days later I again visited the client with a member of the Community Team, to check on his wellbeing. Although he refused to open the door again I was able to have a long conversation with the client.

By this time, I had spoken to the property management company who assured me that although there were some rent arrears they had no intention to evict the client. I also established that the contractors who were working on the neighbouring flats checked on the client each day, and that each Friday the client would leave the flat to go to the shops. I made his mental health worker aware of this.

The conclusion was that the client received medical help and does not feel now that he needs a mental health worker and he has retained his tenancy in the same flat that has now been refurbished.

Case study

Mr JF, a single man who suffers with physical and mental health difficulties, lost his job and struggled to find new work. He started to fall into rent arrears and his mental health deteriorated further.

He moved onto Universal Credit but due to being under 35 he only received the "one-bedroom shared accommodation housing element rate" of £227.38 per month for his housing costs. His rent was £475 per month which left a shortfall of £247.62 per month meaning his rent arrears started to increase rapidly. Consequently, he was served with a notice to leave the property.

He approached the Law Centre for legal advice. Unfortunately, by this time it was too late to stop court proceedings as his rent arrears were at £3243.32 and he had been evicted from his property. He approached the council for housing help but he was not viewed as having priority need so he became homeless. He was referred to the HPP project for further help.

He had been struggling to find a suitable property for several months as he had been banned from the council housing register due to his rent arrears. He also couldn't afford the majority of private rented properties. Furthermore, he wasn't desirable to most private landlords due to his credit history and being a benefit claimant.

We helped him apply for a Discretionary Housing Payment (DHP) from the council, and a grant from Hospitality Action, a charity for people who have worked in the hospitality sector.

The council agreed to make a lump sum DHP award alongside a grant from Hospitality Action to clear the rent arrears. Hospitality Action made a grant of £1196.90 and Discretionary Housing Payment made an award of £2046.42. This cleared the total rent arrears and he was allowed back on the Housing Register. He then successfully secured an affordable one-bedroom flat. He can now focus trying to improve his mental health and seeking employment.

A Lockdown Journey

The following shows how we have been able to carry on assisting our clients during these challenging times and how a phone call to us can help in so many ways.

Throughout lockdown the Law Centre has continued to deliver its housing service. Our receptionist Wendy has been answering the phones throughout, at home. In early April she took a call from Mr JW who had returned home to discover his locks had been changed and he could not get in to his property. Recognising this was urgent, as the client had nowhere to stay that night, she passed the details on to the next stage.

Vanessa, our assessment supervisor, working from home, then contacted Mr JW who explained he had been to stay with a friend the evening before. Mr JW had received a text from his landlord saying that his arrears must be paid in full immediately or the locks to the property would be changed. Later that day the client returned to his property to find his keys did not work. He assumed that the locks had been changed as he could not access his property. Vanessa took the client's full details and details of who the landlord was. She then contacted Steve.

Steve is a specialist housing caseworker with many years' experience. Steve, also working from his home, spoke to the client and took details of what had happened. He also took the landlord's contact details to call him and ask that he allow the client to re-enter the property. Steve set out to the landlord over the phone what the law was and that our next step would be to apply to the Court for an injunction. The landlord refused to allow the client to return to the property.

At that stage Steve transferred the case to Lisa, a to start injunction proceedings.



Lisa, working from home, instructed a barrister and together they prepared the papers for Court.

At that stage Lisa called the landlord again and explained that the papers were ready to be sent to Court and that the landlord would be notified of the hearing date.

The council homeless team were contacted to explain that the client might need B&B accommodation and the contact numbers to obtain B&B accommodation, if needed, were provided.

Diya, whilst working at home, completed a detailed witness statement for the client. The landlord contacted Lisa at the last moment to say he would allow the client back in to the property as he had experience of being taken to court by the Law Centre before.

The client was allowed back in but knew he didn't want to stay there. Gary, also working from home, then contacted Mr JW and arranged to apply for a grant for him to clear some old arrears with the council so that he could move into a council property. Gary also obtained a grant for the client to have white goods at the property.

The case concluded with the Mr JW fully advised and with a new home and many items purchased for that home which would prevent him from getting in to debt to purchase them himself. Gary had also made sure that the client had applied for all the benefits he was entitled to.

A good outcome all achieved by Law Centre staff working from home.

"Just a big thank you to everyone who helped us thank you!"

"Very helpful with a call back service and if they can't help you they will recommend someone"

Debt Unit Report

We continue to offer free, impartial debt and money advice to anyone who is worried about their finances. No amount of debt is too small or too large – we advise on anything from overdrafts, loans and credit cards, to energy arrears, council tax, mortgages – and everything in between.

This year has seen an expansion of the Debt Unit with funding for an additional adviser post from the Money and Pensions Service (MaPS), to enable the Law Centre to meet the ongoing high level of demand for its specialist debt advice service. Sally started as a MaPS debt adviser on 1st April, having worked successfully on 2 other projects at the Law Centre previously. Sally joins Sue, an experienced solicitor and between them they have coped with advising clients in debt throughout lockdown, meaning Sally started her new job working from her spare bedroom at home.

Although a temporary hold was placed on bailiff activity, and FCA guidance meant that creditors were advised to treat debtors appropriately, offering payment breaks, interest freezes and such like, demand during lockdown for debt advice has remained constant. There has been an increase in unemployment, and people on furlough or reduced hours, who have struggled to juggle who and how to pay. Sue and Sally have been able to provide telephone and email advice as immediately as it was sought.

Even before lockdown we were already looking at new ways of offering advice to meet the needs of clients who struggle to actually get in to the Law Centre, often literally as they did not have the money for the bus fare, or caring responsibilities made this impossible. Lockdown has made us re-think how we can make sure people can access advice without barriers, and we are committed to improving our service going forward.

We are now back up and running at the Law Centre's main office on Rose Hill East, as we continue to offer a full debt advice service via phone, email and face to face.



378 participants supported

Case study

Mrs KR initially contacted the Law Centre because she had rent arrears and her private landlord was threatening to serve an eviction notice. Our client had numerous medical diagnoses which severely impacted her mobility and mental health. Her home had a number of adaptations, and was close to her support network and local transport links, so she was really eager to save her home. She was struggling to manage her money due to a change in benefits which she was appealing, coupled with numerous hotel stays and high unexpected vets' bills, which had led to a significant amount of debt and arrears. She felt like the problem was insurmountable, and she didn't know where to start.

We broke things down into "priority" and "non-priority" debts, and took each in turn. We assisted the client with a Discretionary Housing Payment application to clear the majority of the rent arrears, and enabled the client to make an affordable payment arrangement to pay off the remainder of the arrears and prevent her from being evicted. We applied for the Severn Trent Trust Fund to clear the water arrears, and the Big Difference Scheme to reduce the ongoing water charges. We liaised with her energy provider to change her payment method to a prepay method which enabled the client to budget for ongoing bills and make a payment arrangement for the arrears. Once we had sorted all the priority bills out, we were able to make affordable pro-rata payment offers to her non-priority creditors to prevent any further action from being taken. Our client was even able to set some money aside each month for future vets' bills and other unexpected costs!

'After a decade of debt and worry I can now move on and be more confident about dealing with bills and payments in the future - thank you!'

Immigration Unit Report

We offer a specialist immigration advice call-back service on 2 days each week. We also offer a casework service but, unfortunately, this is not part of our free service and we do charge fees, although at rates which seek to cover our costs only. We also have various funded immigration projects running from time to time.

EUSS project

As regular readers will know, we have worked on various EU related projects since 2015. From April 2019 through to September 2020, we have been part of a national project run by the Law Centres Network to support vulnerable EU citizens who have complex cases to make for leave to remain in the UK post Brexit transition period. The project sought to help people who may be homeless, have disabilities, be elderly or a child, a victim of domestic abuse and others who may find it challenging to apply to the EU Settlement Scheme without help.

In April 2020, this 12 month project was extended for a further 6 months until 31st September. At the time of going to press, we have just heard that this work can continue at least until April 2021.

Some of the examples of the cases where we have achieved successful outcomes include:

- A woman who left her abusive partner. Her 2 children could not get new passports or national ID cards without the consent of her ex-husband. The Home Office accepted birth certificates and other evidence instead.
- A Latvian national who had lost his job, suffered mental health illness and became homeless. We were able to liaise with his support worker to provide evidence that he had lived in the UK for 10 years and secure indefinite leave to remain for him so that he could obtain housing support as well as benefits.
- A Portuguese homeless person living in supported accommodation. We liaised closely with the Portuguese Consulate to secure a replacement national ID card for him so that he could apply to the EU Settlement Scheme
- An elderly man who had had a stroke making communication extremely difficult and would not have been able to apply unassisted.

- An elderly housebound disabled lady to apply for Settled Status. She had not worked for many years and so could not submit the required evidence. We spent the afternoon with her and her daughter in her kitchen sorting out and taking photos of old council tax bills that could then be uploaded to her application to prove that she had the required 5 years residence for Indefinite Leave to Remain.

Worryingly, there are still many EU citizens and their families who are yet to apply so we are keen for people to contact us if they are in this position.

Other casework

We do not like to charge for our services, but in the case of immigration, it is hard to secure other funding to support what is quite intensive and specialised work. Where we do take on cases, it is generally to help people to apply for leave to enter or remain in the UK on the basis of their family relationships. Sometimes we are able to help people, perhaps because they have young children who are British citizens, remain in the UK on Human Rights grounds. We desperately need to increase the amount of immigration advice that we can offer, due to the lack of any other specialist immigration advice agency in the County, but this takes funds, unfortunately.

We were very fortunate and grateful to receive a funding award from the AB Charitable Trust in March this year, specifically to help us support families whose immigration status is precarious, but who can hardly afford to pay the Home Office fees, let alone the cost of immigration advice. Often such people will be single parent mums, who have been left without means of support. We have also supported people with disabilities who do not think that they can meet the Home Office financial requirements to be united with their spouses. The funding from AB Charitable Trust has enabled us to provide more help to this group of people.

In the last year we also saw happy conclusions to a couple of cases that had become epic journeys of despair for the persons involved.

“Mr McIlveen gave me a fantastic service. Without his help I would not have achieved my goal. He was more than helpful, even when I left messages with the receptionist he got back to me. I would highly recommend him to anyone as I got a A1 service.”

Case study

Ken and Angie met on line playing word games in 2016. Angie was in Chesterfield, Ken in the US. A relationship developed and the two visited each other a few times. Eventually, Ken proposed to Angie and they decided to make their life together in the UK. In the summer of 2017, Ken came for a visit, to make preparations to move to the UK. They contacted a firm of immigration solicitors in Birmingham, who told Ken he could apply to stay in the UK as Angie's partner whilst here as a visitor. They paid the firm's fee and the Home Office fee and completed the application form.

They waited for a decision from the Home Office. More than a year went by without an answer. The company assured Ken that this was not unusual, but following more delay and enquiries, Ken was told that he would have to resubmit his application. Ken signed another application form and paid the firm more fees. By this time, it was November 2018. Some months later, out of the blue Ken got a letter from the Home Office telling him he had to go to the immigration reporting centre in Sheffield and that he was now on immigration bail. He was shocked by this news and so contacted his solicitor. He was told that the company was closed and his case would be transferred to another company, based in Manchester. His call was transferred to someone in the other firm directly. The new adviser said they would help him but he would have to pay another £2,000 in fees. Ken says that he was also advised not to report as required as he might be detained.

Fortunately, Ken and Angie were so alarmed at the course of events and the advice that they had been given that they contacted Angie's local MP. The MP's office immediately referred them to us for advice.

We had to tell them that the worst thing Ken could do was not to report as directed as he could end up being arrested and removed from the UK fairly swiftly. We also had to tell him that the application he had made had no prospects of success and he had been badly advised to make it. In short, visitors cannot simply 'switch' their leave into another category whilst in the UK. When Ken attended to report to the Home Office, unsurprisingly, he was served with the refusal decision and told to leave the UK immediately or face forced removal.

Sometimes it is necessary to give hard advice. We advised Ken that he should leave the UK as soon as possible before any decision to remove him was taken. We would then be able to support his application for entry clearance as Angie's partner. Ken and Angie followed our advice.

We found out that the company, Burstow & Spencer, was part of an alleged sham immigration scheme and had been closed down by the Office of the Immigration Services Commissioner and its directors were being prosecuted for providing illegal immigration advice. The directors were subsequently convicted, along with others. Sadly, Ken and Angie's money has not been recovered. Ken had been one of many victims of this company's poor, unregulated, work. The second firm has also been wound up and again, Ken has not had his money returned.

We submitted the correct application for entry clearance for Ken along with detailed representations about the company's wrongdoing and Ken's innocent reliance on their bad advice. It was still a bumpy road but at the second attempt Ken's application was granted and he and Angie were finally reunited in early 2020.

And to end on a happy note, we recently learned that Ken and Angie have finally been able to marry.

Other Projects

Our commitment to project work and finding funding to expand the numbers of people that we can assist and to retain existing services has continued. At the heart of our projects is the recognition that some of our clients would benefit from additional support, in addition to the help of case workers. We are proud that the following projects have continued.

Money Sorted in D2N2

Funded by the European Social Fund (ESF) and The National Lottery Community Fund.

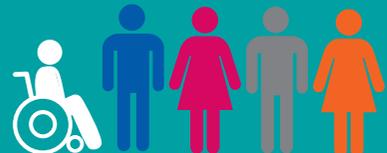
The aim of the project is to support people who are unemployed or economically inactive to improve their financial well-being and capability, access training, and increase their aspirations towards the labour market.

We have two personal navigators who provide bespoke interventions by identifying gaps in skills, knowledge and confidence, thus enabling people to gain individual responsibility for their finances and life situations. This year has seen an increase in complex referrals into the project, increase in people with mental health issues and those struggling with universal credit benefit, and accessing it digitally.

Usually, our navigators work on a 1:1 basis in participant's homes or via face-to-face interactions and appointments in the community or at the Derbyshire Law Centre. As a result of Covid, working methods have changed, but our practical help and support continue regardless. We continue to support people remotely, offering an effective service; providing links with debt & housing case workers at DLC, providing access to funds, providing advocacy and access to services, plus morale and mental health support during Covid-19. The service dovetails well with our Debt and Housing Units in particular, offering a holistic approach for our clients.

'Money Sorted' Personal navigators continue to support people in Chesterfield, NE Derbyshire, Bolsover, Bassetlaw and Shirebrook.

Historically, we have assisted around 80 participants each year, and we anticipate that demand for this service will increase in the months to come. Funding is currently in place until March 2022.

 **80** participants supported

Case study

Mr LW was in crisis and initially in need of budgeting and money management support. He could not see a way forward with his debts and housing issues, everything seemed too complicated and that's where the 'Money Sorted project' assisted him to set up a simple budgeting system that recognised the importance of making priority payments. We then explored ways in which he could improve his finances and make savings, assisting him to obtain council tax reduction, discretionary housing payment, Big Difference Scheme water discount, warmer homes grant, low cost car insurance, and school meal vouchers, and by reviewing shopping habits and using brand swaps LW was able to make savings of £2680. In addition, Mr LW was supported by the 'Money Sorted project' and the debt team at DLC to tackle his debt issues and go through debt relief order-which was funded by 'Money Sorted'.

What difference has Money Sorted in D2N2 made to you?

"I couldn't see ahead to start with, Money Sorted gave me a door to walk through ...a second chance"

Derbyshire One-to-One Bilingual Crisis Buddy Service

This project, which is entering its final year provides support to residents of Derbyshire and Derby City. The five partners (Derby Law Centre, Derbyshire Unemployed Workers Centre, LINKS, St James and Community Action Derby) have worked together to recruit, train and support 'buddies' within their local communities, whose first language is not English, to support residents to access local services at a time they are in crisis. The 'buddies' are there to act as a friend and to provide support.

Over the past year, including during lockdown, the Derbyshire buddies have supported over 45 individuals and families, with issues ranging from debt, housing, benefits, health, immigration and employment. We have also supported a number of the beneficiaries to access food parcels.

"I am so happy that I met Maria when I did. I was at my lowest. She helped me to sort out my benefits and debt"



45 individuals and families helped

Opportunity and Change

An employment-related support project for people facing severe and multiple disadvantage. It is delivered by a partnership of community-based organisations across Derby, Derbyshire, Nottingham and Nottinghamshire. The Project is a part of the Building Better Opportunities Programme (BBO) which is funded by the European Social Fund (ESF) and The National Lottery Community Fund.

The project is led by Framework and is worked on by our registered Social Worker, Mollie Roe and our Advocate, AF at DLC to offer support to individuals

with multiple complex needs to access universal or social care services in Derby & Derbyshire to open up their pathway to work, education or training. From the 1st September 2019 - 31st December 2019 the team supported 40 participants that were referred from partner organisations with identified support needs.



40 participants supported

Case study

Ms CB was a single female that had been on the project for many months. Ms CB has learning disabilities and is highly anxious, needing constant reassurance.

Mollie and AF took her case on during Covid-19 lockdown and during her assessment with Mollie, Ms CB had stated she would like to move area.

Due to regulations of Covid-19 and no face to face contact, AF began weekly telephone calls to Ms CB to ensure she felt supported and to combat the loneliness of living alone.

Mollie worked with Adult Social Care locally and in different areas of the country, housing associations and the participant to ensure support would be continued and personalised to Ms CB.

Ms CB is now living in the area she had chosen and is awaiting an assessment from Adult Social Care. The team are hopeful that she will receive the care she is requesting based on the evidence provided by Mollie and AF.

Our Volunteers

Our volunteering scheme at the Law Centre has been running successfully for over ten years, providing opportunities for students and those with a general interest in law and the work that we do. Volunteers play a vital role in all aspects of the Law Centre and as well as being trustees one of the main roles of our volunteers is to provide an initial assessment service.

The last 10 years

Over the past few years the volunteer team has gone through a number of changes, both in its size and the role it provides. Ten years ago, the Law Centre received funding to support volunteers to access training and qualifications. Their role was to provide the receptionist role. This was developed further and the signposting role was developed. Volunteers could progress to this if they wished. At that stage we had a team of over 30 volunteers and a dedicated volunteer co-ordinator. Fast forward 10 years and for various business reasons we now employ a paid receptionist, who was one of the volunteers, and we now have a small team of 6 assessors. Over the past few years we have also worked hard to foster relationships with local schools and have hosted a number of students studying their GCSEs and A Levels.

More recently

This year started positive, the small team of 6 volunteers were strong and continued to provide support to all the staff by carrying out the assessment for all enquiries. Between them they contribute over 35 hours per week of time. We also had 2 A' level students who regularly volunteered over 5 hours per week. Further to this we had agreed to provide work placement to a number of students before the end of their school year. Like many organisations this all came to a sudden halt in March 2020. As part of our risk assessment volunteering came to a stop mid-March in an attempt to reduce the number of staff in the office. Due to supervision requirements, equipment and insurance we have sadly not been able to use volunteers since the risk assessment was put in place. With the office closed from 23rd March we also had to cancel all the work placements we had arranged.

Thank you and goodbye

Sadly, whilst working hard to return to the office, including having a ventilation system fitted to the room to help with the air circulation Katie and Nadine, 2 of our longest serving volunteers decided not to return. Nadine has completed over 10 years with the law centre, starting in March 2010 as a receptionist and rapidly progressing to a signposter and then to an assessor. Her smile will be missed. Katie had done 6 years and has always been an assessor. Her flowers and plants will be missed. All the staff and remaining volunteers wish them well in what they decide to do going forward. As with all of our volunteers they will always be welcome to pop in for a socially distanced coffee. On the positive side, Liz, one of our assessors, was internally recruited to the part time role of receptionist. Well done Liz.

Next steps

The loss of 3 volunteers does leave gaps in the team and plans are already being made to develop the team further once a socially distanced recruitment and training plan can be developed. We have a list of people who have contacted us and will be in contact once plans are finalised.

If you are interested in volunteering please contact dlc@derbyshirelawcentre.org.uk or check our website for more information.

Volunteers

- Nancy Fox
- Tim Mak
- Isabel Wade
- Liz Clarke
- Nadine Tyrall
- Katie France

Work experience

- Hannah Haythorne
- Charlie Renshaw

***Our volunteers
give 35 hours
per week to the
organisation***

Quotes from our volunteers

"It has been so different volunteering at the Law Centre in the time of Covid-19.

Generally, enquiries have been about employment issues and housing concerns with associated arrears, issues which no doubt will grow as furlough ends and unemployment grows.

Debt will become a greater issue.

Volunteering is still rewarding by talking to clients and hopefully allaying their concerns. Even if DLC do not offer advice to their problem it is fulfilling to be able to point callers to where they can get the advice. The opportunity to talk about issues can greatly assist clients even if we cannot make the issues disappear completely."

Our work experience

Until March this year Hannah Haythorne was one of two students doing work experience with us. Here Hannah tells us about her experience.

"I am currently doing my A levels in 6th form and was allowed to do work experience at Derbyshire Law Centre. I was at the Law Centre every Wednesday afternoon and got to see how everything works. I enjoyed my time helping Wendy on reception and the admin team with various admin tasks. It was really interesting to see how things work when a client rings up and how they are dealt with.

I was also able to attend Court with a caseworker and a barrister and to see how things happen at Court. The client was present and the barrister had to explain what was going on to the client in a way they understood as the case was about the client's home.

Seeing real clients who needed help, sometimes really urgently, enabled me to understand how things work at the Law Centre and how the whole team works together to help people in Derbyshire."

We wish both students taking exams this year all the best with their results. We hope to see them again when we are able to welcome them back.



Staff at Derbyshire Law Centre saying thank you to all the volunteers as part of National Volunteers' Week, May, 2020.

"It was frustrating not to be able to help with the workload whilst the office was closed. I was really impressed and proud that the Law Centre continued to provide a great service. I felt very safe returning to the office in September, knowing that a thorough and caring assessment had been made of the workplace."

View from Paralegals

Last year saw us expand our team with two new paralegals. These paralegals not only provide vital support to case workers but together with our trainee solicitor allow us to invest in the future of Social Welfare Law, giving opportunities to the future generation of solicitors and case workers.

Below they give us a flavour of what the last year has been like and how Covid 19 has impacted on them and their work.

Diya Kaur

Housing paralegal

I began my position as a paralegal in the Housing Unit on the 5th August 2019. Within my first few weeks here, I was attending Court with our solicitors, taking instructions from clients and drafting legal documents under supervision. I am also a lone fulltime parent to three children and I do not live locally to Chesterfield. I am grateful that these factors have not been an issue and to say that the Law Centre supports my home life just as much as my professional life is an understatement.

At the Law Centre, we have continued to work throughout these last six months. We have helped many clients who have been struggling to keep a roof over their head due to illegal evictions and harassment. We have applied for emergency injunctions where needed and we have also liaised with local councils, hotels and providers in a robust attempt to keep people off the streets.

It is a credit to our organisation that during such a difficult time, we have delivered a full service to those that needed it.

Romany Kisbee-Batho

Employment, immigration and debt paralegal

I joined the Law Centre as a paralegal in immigration, employment and debt last September 2019. In my work with the Employment Unit, my responsibility started to increase in the New Year, and I began assisting with call-backs regarding unlawful deduction of wages, notice/holiday pay, unfair dismissal and redundancies. Later on, I started to do some follow up work to support members of the team, including conducting interviews with clients, taking instructions and drafting advice letters under close supervision. Having never studied employment law before, I really enjoyed the challenge of learning this new area of law and helping to protect employee's legal rights.

During the pandemic and due to resources, I was focussed mainly in the employment team. The unit was inundated with enquiries and I took the lead on keeping up to date with the changes in the government regulations, particularly regarding the Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme and furlough. It was a very busy, but exciting, time to work in the Employment Unit.



View from a Trainee

Matthew Brown

Trainee Solicitor – funded by The Law Society Diversity Access Scheme

I began my training contract in September 2019 having spent the previous three years as a paralegal here at the Law Centre. My first seat was in the Employment Unit which meant my training contract was essentially a fresh start for me having been a paralegal in the housing unit previously.

I quickly got to grips with unfair dismissal claims, redundancies and notice/holiday pay issues which allowed me to see clients and advise them appropriately with close supervision. I thoroughly enjoyed my six months in the employment unit and found it to be a hugely rewarding area to work in when helping clients with their problems with employers and former employers.

In March 2020, I moved back into the Housing Unit and I began to get to grips with the area I had previously worked in as a paralegal. I undertook my first piece of advocacy in my first week when I represented a client at an Introductory Tenancy Review Hearing before Chesterfield Borough Council's Appeals and Regulatory Committee. Although nervous prior to the hearing, I was grateful for the advocacy experience very early on which helped me learn a great deal. Just a couple of weeks later, the country was gripped by Coronavirus and our offices shut. The normal way of working completely changed, which personally proved difficult as a trainee, but I have still developed my knowledge and advised clients on unlawful evictions, disrepair issues and notices whilst working at home.

As I write this short column, Derbyshire Law Centre's offices have reopened to the public for the first time in over 5 months and the stay on possession proceedings has been lifted with hearings listed in the coming days.



I think it is safe to say that we are entering the unknown over the coming weeks and months but it is something we will be ready for!

We are pleased to report that we have been offered a grant from The Legal Education Foundation to become a host organisation for the Justice First Fellowship and employ a new trainee solicitor / Justice First Fellow from January 2021. This is fantastic news as it means we can continue our commitment to training social welfare lawyers of the future.

Financial Review of the year

The Law Centre has an excellent record of working in partnership with others to provide a high quality service for the disadvantaged people in the communities we serve.

We started the year with a predicted deficit of £16,000. The team has worked hard to bring together the financial and funding strategies to identify the aims and the opportunities to reduce that prediction. Working with existing and new partners, this has been successful and has allowed us to complete the year in a better position.

However, compared to the previous year, we have increased our income by 30% and our staff resources by 19%. This increase is a clear identification of the increased need for the services that we provide.

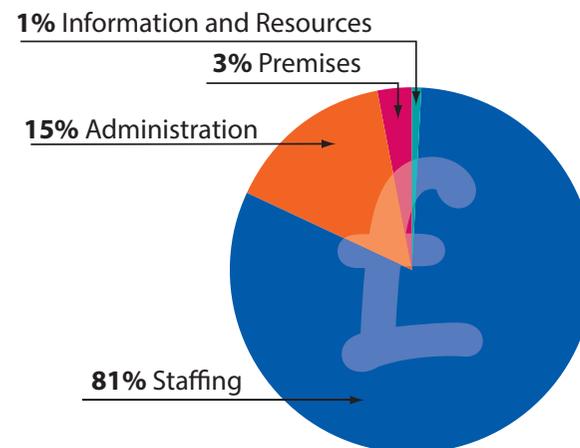
Core funds have remained static compared to the previous year but project income has dramatically increased. Our Legal Aid Agency contracts in housing were extended and a new discrimination contract was achieved from October 19. Our County Court Duty Scheme has been extended once again.

Income has been increased for all our areas of law but particular mention to our Money and Pension Service which has been continued and from 20/21 will be increased.

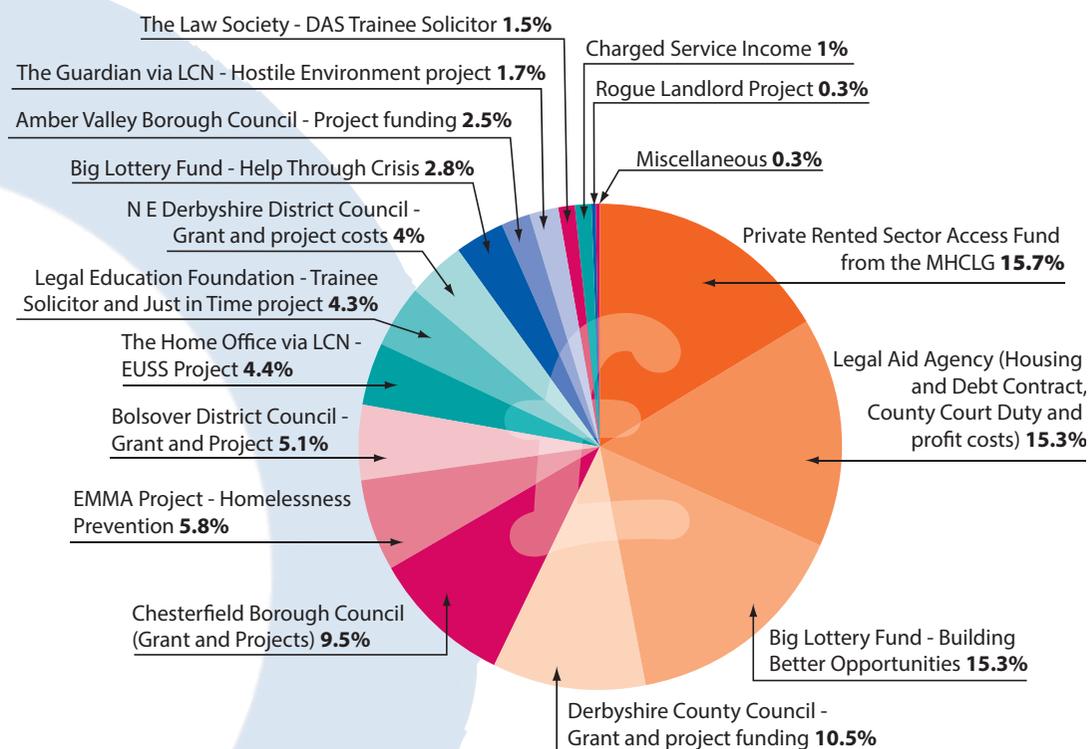
The new staff employed were mainly as a result of the Private Rented Sector funding from the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government. Part of this project was a fund to directly assist clients with financial issues preventing them from getting or retaining a tenancy. Employment resources increased slightly during the year. Investing more time into immigration work allowed us to employ a new Strategic Lead Co-ordinator.

We have also been able to successfully retain projects or find new funding that has enabled us to retain 5 members of staff, including the newly qualified solicitor.

How we spend our money



Income Expenditure - Total Income 2019/2020



We are pleased to report that our auditors have no concerns on our viability as a going concern.

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, North East Derbyshire District Council and Bolsover District Council is essential for the survival of our organisation as they provide core grants. These core funds enable the Law Centre to retain high quality staff, to provide an excellent service and, importantly, to attract/retain other funding from such places as The Big Lottery and more. Thanks also to:

- Amber Valley Borough Council
- Derbyshire Public Health
- European Union
- Legal Aid Agency
- Legal Education Foundation
- Money Advice and Pensions Service
- Ministry of Housing Communities and Local Government
- The Guardian, via Law Centres Network
- The Home Office, via Law Centres Network
- The Law Society
- The National Lottery Community Fund

We are also reliant upon donations. Donations are accepted through our Facebook page. Gift-Aiding increases the value of donations.

For full information on our 2019/20 accounts, please see our website www.derbyshirelawcentre.org.uk/about-us where you will find a full copy of the audited accounts.

Client Feedback

We value the feedback we receive from our clients. It is reported to our Management Committee every quarter.

Feedback

Of the 964 feedback questionnaires sent to clients, 6.8% were returned. Of the 6.8% less than 0.5% reflected a negative comment to the 9 questions we ask. The negative responses were spread amongst 8 questions, with only 2 clients responding negatively to one question. Analysis of the feedback did not identify any one area that the Law Centre and its staff can actively improve on. However, staff were reminded to be considerate of how they communicate with clients and to review any written documentation we send or refer to, to ensure that it is easy to understand.

Complaints

We received 4 complaints between April 2019 to March 2020. Of the 4 complaints 3 were for complicated matters which required the opinions of a barrister or an engineering specialist. In these cases, the outcome or the legal advice was not favourable to the client and the adviser could not take the case further. This led to a difference of opinion between the client and the legal team. Of the 4 complainants, one took up the offer to meet with a member of the management committee as per our complaints procedure. None of the complainants took their issue to the legal ombudsman.

Google Reviews

We have received 14 comments, of which 9 gave 5 stars, 3 gave 4 and 2 gave us 3 stars, there was no negative comments. **Our overall score currently stands at 4.3**, down 0.1 from last year.

"The help these people provide is amazing, can't sing their praises highly enough!!"

"All the staff I met at DLC were fantastic, polite, helpful and just very nice people."

"Provide a top service keep up the brilliant work."

"I have been overwhelmed by the help and I cannot thank you enough."

Our Performance

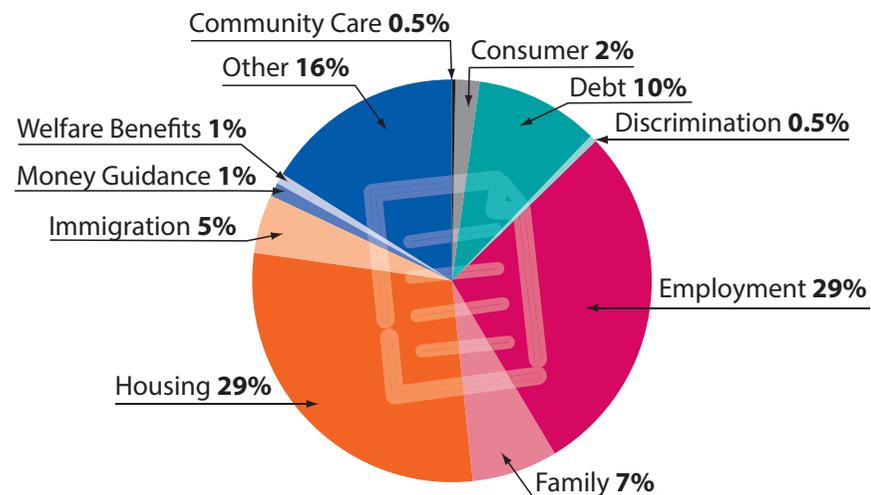
Enquiries

Number of enquiries advised on: **4510**

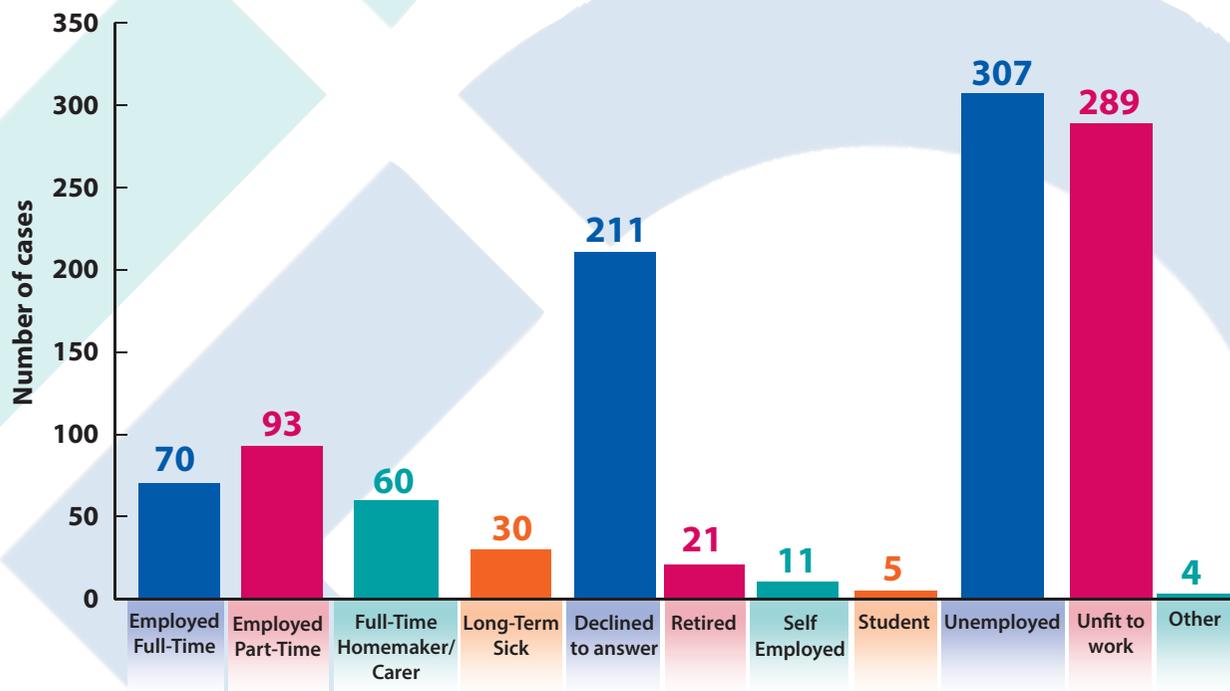
Cases

Number of cases opened during
1.9.2019 - 31.8.2020: **1101**

Type of enquiries

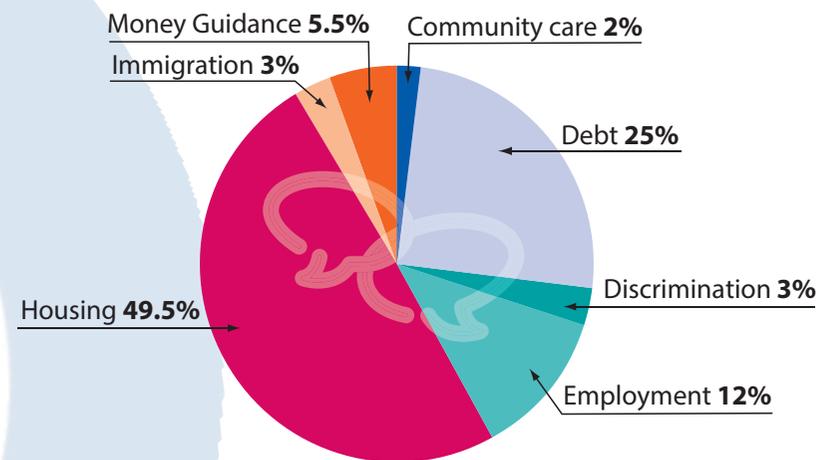


Clients' economic status

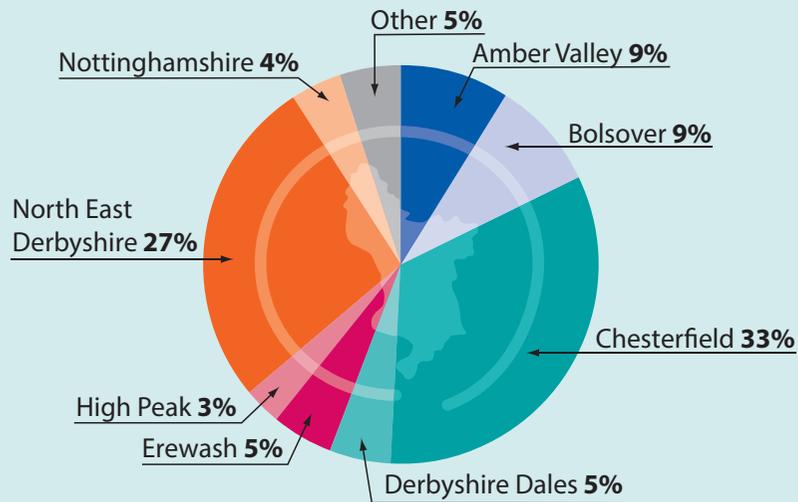


Clients' economic status

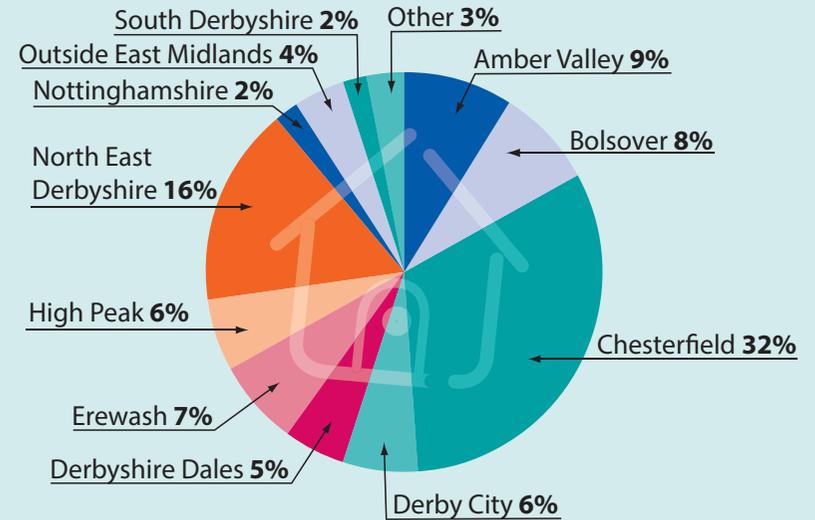
Type of cases



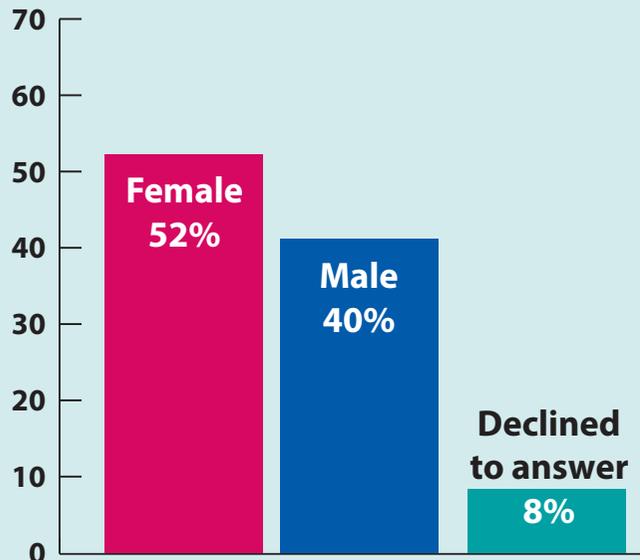
Where do clients live?



Where do our callers live?



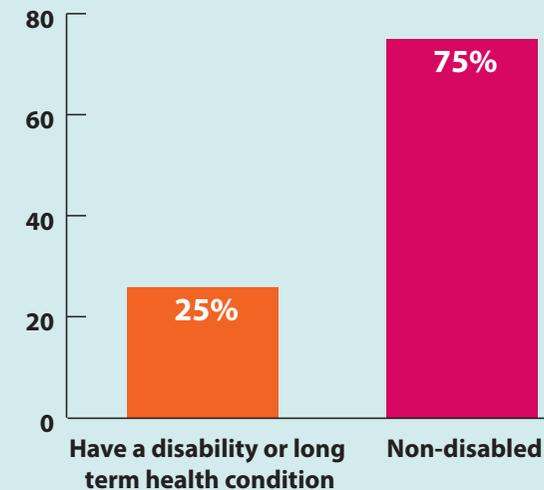
Gender of our clients



Age ranges of our clients

under 24 yrs	=	7%
25 -34yrs	=	25%
35 - 49yrs	=	34%
50 - 64yrs	=	22%
Over 65yrs	=	4%
Declined to answer	=	8%

Disability or long term health condition of our clients



Our Employees

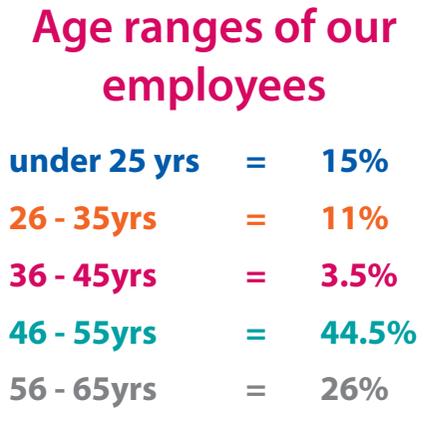
Our commitment to Equality and Diversity

Derbyshire Law Centre is committed to eliminating unlawful discrimination and to promoting equality and diversity within all our policies, practices and procedures. We are proud to have 'Disability Confident Employer' accreditation.

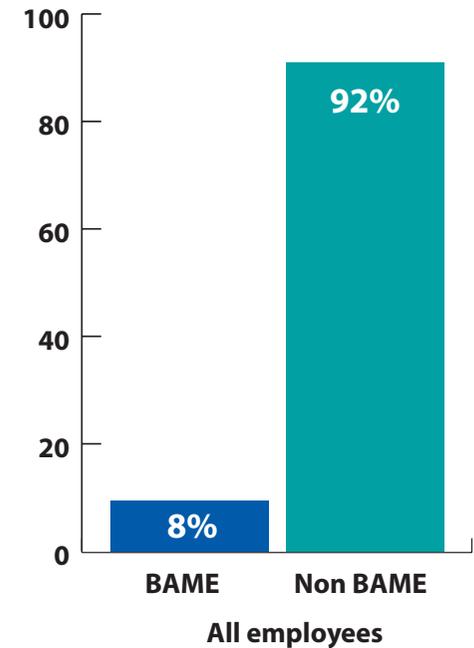


In March this year as part of our annual business planning process we updated our business plan to include further plans in this area and have recently set up an Equality and Diversity Working group.

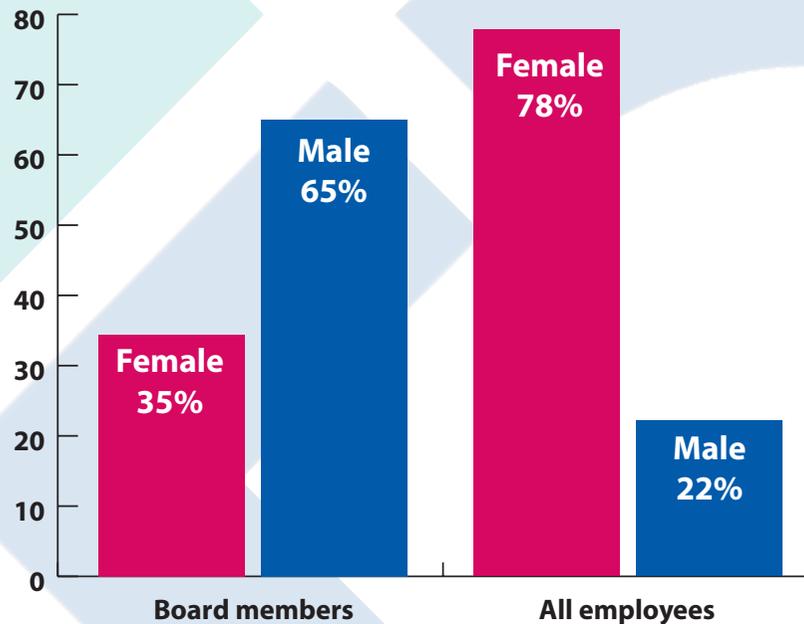
We look forward to updating you on progress in next year's report.



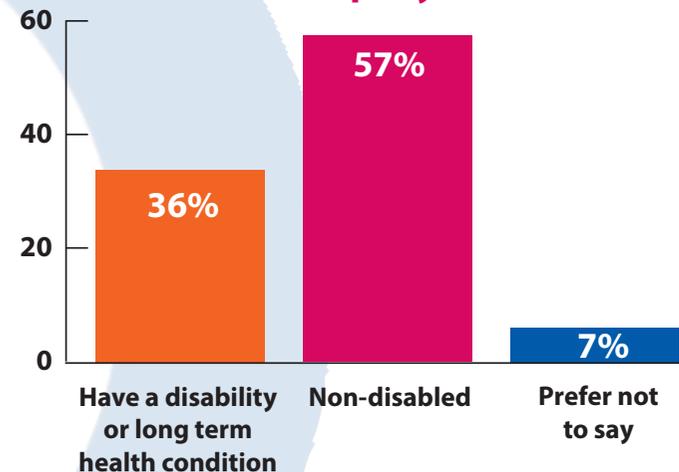
Ethnicity of employees



Gender of employees



Disability or long term health condition of employees



Other Achievements

Deaf Legal Advice Day

On Saturday 1st February, 2020 we held an event for deaf people to access free legal advice. The event provided an opportunity for us as an organisation to test a new pro-bono model, to raise awareness within the deaf community of the free legal services that the Law Centre, CAB (Citizens Advice) and DUWC (Derbyshire Unemployed Workers Centre) provide, to gain evidence and stories from deaf people to support a joint funding bid with BDA (British Deaf Association) for a part time discrimination caseworker and to increase referrals to our services.

The day was a great success!



What we achieved

The statistics show that we achieved our aim of raising awareness.



- Impressions/Reach**33,805**
- Engagements/Clicks**1931**
- Shares/Retweets**292**
- Viewings**4573**

Unfortunately Covid 19 has meant that we have been unable to host another event or to further our work on a joint funding bid but we remain committed to working with this group and other minority groups in the future.

Presidency for Lisa

In April this year Lisa Haythorne, our housing solicitor became President of The Sheffield and District Law Society. Lisa is delighted and honoured to have been elected. Because of her background and previous experience, Lisa is hoping to work with not only the high street firms, but also firms that still provide legal aid work, which she feels can be a forgotten part of the profession. She is delighted to have been asked to be a judge for the Yorkshire Legal Awards in December.



Lisa's chosen charity 2020 - 2021

This year The Sheffield & District Law Society will be raising money to support Helen's Trust - an extremely special, local charity, close to Lisa's heart. They help to facilitate end of life care at home and were a big help when Lisa's dad sadly passed away earlier this year.

Solicitor status for Beth

We are delighted to report that in January this year Beth Holt, our Trainee Solicitor qualified as a solicitor and graduated from the Justice First Fellowship. Beth is currently a member of the Employment and Immigration Unit.

"Time has flown by since starting my Training Contract in January 2018. I feel incredibly lucky to have completed it at Derbyshire Law Centre and even more so now that I am working here as a qualified Solicitor. I have the most supportive colleagues and I could not have done it without all of them. Thank you!"



Pictured: Beth Holt at the Justice First Fellowship award dinner with Lady Hale.

Law Society's Excellence Awards

You may remember that in last year's report we told you we had been shortlisted as one of the finalists for The Law Society's Excellence Awards 2019 for:

- Access to Justice Award
- Solicitor of the Year – in House Award - Lisa Haythorne

The ceremony took place last October and although we didn't win we are extremely proud to have been shortlisted.



Derbyshire Law Centre staff at the Law Society's Excellence Award Ceremony, October 2019

We are also reliant upon donations.
Our donations page may be found at
www.mydonate.bt.com/charities/derbyshirelawcentre
Donations are also accepted through our Facebook page.



Pictured: Steve Taylor and Teresa Waldron receiving their 30 years and 25 years' service awards from former Chair, Chris Collard, at last year's AGM.

Long Service Awards

We were delighted to be able to present 2 long service awards to Steve Taylor, Housing caseworker and Teresa Waldron, Co-ordinator at our AGM last November. Steve has been with the Law Centre for 30 years and Teresa for 25 years. We thank them both for their dedication and commitment to the work of Derbyshire Law Centre.

Thank you to our Trustees

We are governed by our board of trustees, known as our Management Committee, elected annually at our AGM by our members.

The Management Committee calendar has been a busy one and despite restrictions we have been able to maintain our meeting schedule. Management Committee members have also been able to visit the offices to meet staff and view our new office premises, as well as attend the Annual Business Planning Day in February to complete a review of our Business Plan and agree our priorities for the next twelve months and beyond.

Our Management Committee Members

Representative	Representing
Councillor Howard Borrell	Chesterfield Borough Council
Councillor John Boulton	Derbyshire County Council
Rob Busby	Individual Member
Chris Collard	Individual Member
Alan Crow (Treasurer)	Individual Member
John Duncan	Age Concern (Chesterfield and District)
Councillor Jenny Flood (Vice Chair)	Chesterfield Borough Council
Councillor Angelique Foster	Derbyshire County Council
Michael Gordon (Chair)	Individual member
Colin Hampton	Derbyshire Unemployed Workers' Centres
Councillor Duncan McGregor	Bolsover District Council
Councillor Alan Powell	North East Derbyshire District Council
José Rodgers	Mental Health Carers Community - Chesterfield & North Derbyshire
David Shaw	Chesterfield Citizens Advice
Julie Skill	Derby and District Law Society
Councillor Derrick Skinner	Clay Cross Parish Council
Tom Snowdon	Chesterfield Liberal Democrats (until 6.11.2019)
Councillor Kelly Thornton	Staveley Town Council (until 6.11.2019)
Marion Thorpe	Touchstone Community Development Ltd (until 6.11.2019)
Elaine Tidd	Individual Member
Angela Webster	Staveley Seniors
Sarah White (Secretary)	Individual Member
Mick Wilson	Amber Valley Borough Council

"I joined the Management Committee as a representative of Amber Valley Borough Council because of my long involvement in advice services in Derbyshire. The highlights are the successful away day and getting to meet the staff before lockdown hit."



Staff and Management Committee members at our Annual Business Planning Day, February 2020

Our Members

Individual Members

Amanda Astle
Shay Boyle
Robert Busby
John Alan Crow
Chris Collard
Andrew Cross
Chloe Doxey
Rachel Driver
David Eccles
Graham Fairs
Terry Gilby
Patricia Gilby
Ruth George
Mark Grayling
Mike Greenhalf
Mary Honeyben
Trevor Hughes
Linda James
Genet Morley
Kevin Morley
Dennis Mullings
Martin O'Kane
Enid Robinson
Clarke Rogerson
Hazel Rotherham
Y Sorefan
Marion Thorpe
Elaine Tidd
Margaret Vallins
Tom Vallins

Alison Westray-Chapman
Sarah White

Organisational Members

50+ Inspired Group
African Caribbean Community Association
Age Concern - Chesterfield and District
Age UK - Derby and Derbyshire
Aldercar and Langley Mill Parish Council
Asian Association of Chesterfield and North Derbyshire
Ault Hucknall Parish Council
Bamford with Thornhill Parish Council
Belper Town Council
Bradwell Parish Council
Bretby Parish Council
Brimington Parish Council
Burnaston Parish Council
Chesterfield Ability
C'field and North Derbyshire Tinnitus Support Grp
C'field Constituency Labour Party
C'field Liberal Democrats
C'field Muslim association
Citizens Advice Chesterfield
Citizens Advice Derbyshire Districts
Clay Cross Parish Council
Community Mental Health Team - Chesterfield
Cruse Bereavement Care
Deaf and Hearing Support - Chesterfield
Derby and District Law Society
Derbyshire Alcohol Advice Service
Derbyshire Gypsy Liason Grp
Derbyshire Unemployed Workers Centre
Eckington Parish Council
Elm Foundation
Elmton with Creswell Parish Council
Grassmoor, Hasland and Winsick Parish Council
Hartington Upper Quarter Parish Council
Heanor and Loscoe Town Council
Heath and Holmewood Parish Council
Hulland Ward Parish Council
Links CVS
Matlock Town Council
Muslim Welfare Association - Chesterfield and North Derbyshire
NE Derbyshire labour party
North Derbyshire Community Drug Team
Mental Health Carers Community - Chesterfield and North Derbyshire
Old Bolsover Town Council
Our Vision Our Future
Overseal Parish Council
RELATE C'field
Ripley Town Council
Rural Action Derbyshire

SAIL
Sanctuary Housing
Shirland and Higham Parish Council
Sight Support Derbyshire
SPODA
Staveley Seniors Forum
Staveley Town Council
Stenson Fields Parish Council
Stoney Middleton Parish Council
Stonham Housing Assoc
The Volunteer Centre - Chesterfield and North East Derbyshire
Tibshelf Parish Council
Touchstone Community Development Ltd
TRUST
UNISON - CBC
UNISON - NEDDC
Unstone Parish Council
USDAAW - Chesterfield
Whitwell Parish Council
Wingerworth Parish Council
Winster Parish Council
Wirksworth Parish Council
Single Parent Network
Staveley CAB
TGWU Coalite Chemicals Branch 98/533
The Kinsman Project
Tontine Road Carers Support Group
Unit 10
West Street Carers Support Group
Womens Royal Voluntary Service

The Team at Derbyshire Law Centre



Sue Allard
Solicitor
(Housing & Debt)



Helen Bagley
Co-ordinator
(Strategic Lead)



Wendy Bell
Administrator
(Reception)



Matthew Brown
Trainee Solicitor



Sharon Challands
Co-ordinator
(Offices & Resources)



Jane Clarence
Administrator
(Caseworker Support)



FC
Administrator
(Finance)



VE
Assessment
Supervisor



AF
Advocate for
Opportunity & Change



Lisa Haythorne
Solicitor (Housing,
Debt & Community
Care)



Laura Holland
Solicitor (Housing)



Beth Holt
Solicitor (Employment
and Immigration)



Tracey Humphries
Administrator



Diya Kaur
Paralegal (Housing
and Debt)



Romany Kisbee-Batho
Paralegal (Employment
and Immigration)



Tony McIlveen
Senior Solicitor
(Immigration &
Employment)



Andrew Montgomery
Advice Worker
(Employment)



DP
Personal Navigator
For Money Sorted in
D2N2



Sally Preece
Advice Worker
(Debt)



Mollie Roe
Social Worker for
Opportunity and Change



Gary Steel
Paralegal (Housing
and Debt)



Ellen Taylor
Advice Worker
(Employment)



Steve Taylor
Advice Worker (Housing
and Community Care)



Nikki Tugby
Coordinator (Reception
and Assessment
Services)



Teresa Waldron
Co-ordinator
(Communications, Projects
and Fundraising)



Kev Weston
Homeless Prevention
Worker



Joe Wilson
Homeless Prevention
Worker



Carmen Yates
Personal Navigator For
Money Sorted in D2N2



Our Offices

Appointments available in offices throughout Derbyshire: Bolsover, Buxton, Chesterfield, Eckington, Ilkeston and Ripley.

Please call 01246 550674 to arrange.

Bolsover

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

Buxton

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

Chesterfield

Derbyshire Law Centre, 1 Rose Hill East, Chesterfield, S40 1XZ.

Eckington

Eckington Library, Market Street, Eckington, S21 4JG.

Ilkeston

In the office of Citizens Advice Derbyshire Districts, Castledine House, Heanor Road, Ilkeston, DE7 8DY.

Ripley

In the office of Amber Valley Borough Council, Town Hall, Ripley, DE5 3BT.

Our Organisation

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Registered Charity No: 702419

Solicitors Regulation Authority: Practice No 71302

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