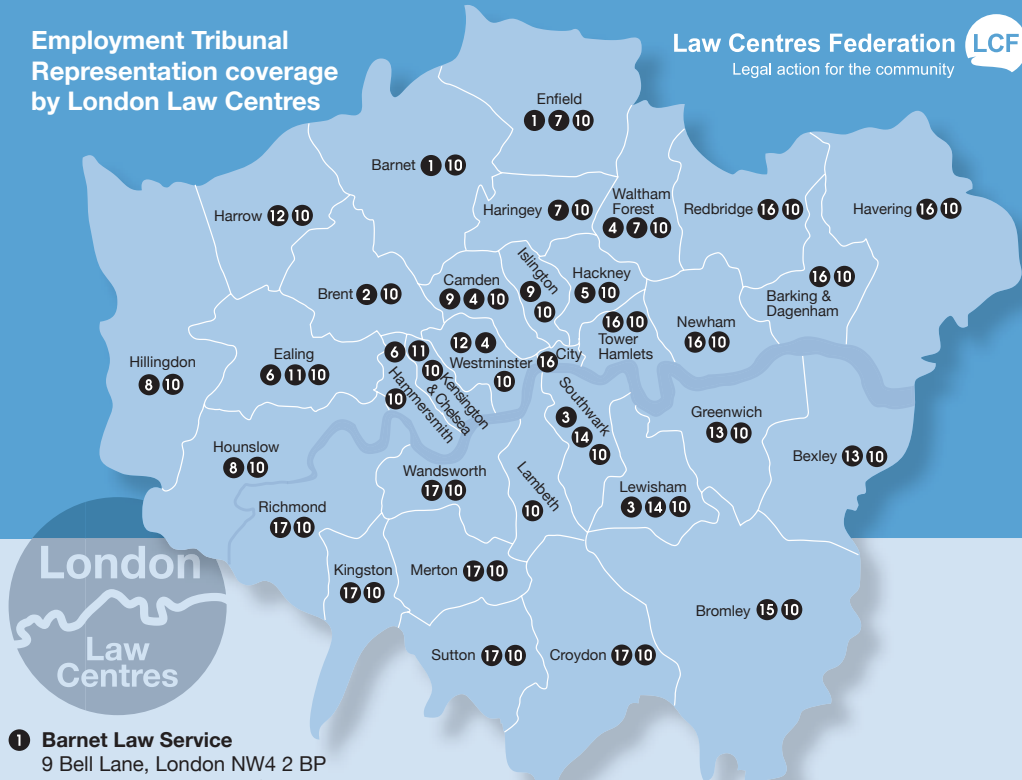


Employment Tribunal Representation

London

London
Law
Centres

Law Centres



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- 4 Central London Law Centre**
We work in partnership with Central London Law Centre which has a London-wide remit with particular focus on Camden, Waltham Forest and Westminster.
- 5 Hackney Community Law Centre**
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Supported by London Councils, London Law Centres[®] are working in partnership to provide Employment Tribunal (ET) representation and representation at the Employment Appeals Tribunals (EAT) for those people that cannot afford to pay for legal advice and representation.

This is a much needed project as there is no public funding for representation at either the ET or EAT. Our objective is that the London Law Centres working together will improve access to legal advice across London.

Law Centres provide legal advice on employment cases which include unfair dismissal, sex, race, disability, age, religion or belief, and sexual orientation discrimination, breach of contract, redundancy pay, unfair dismissal in relation to maternity/paternity leave and/or pay.

Although Tribunals were set up to be less formal and user-friendly, employment law has become more complicated due to an increase in legislation and case law. This can be very daunting for clients and more so for clients whose first language is not English. Many Law Centre clients have difficulty understanding concepts such as unfair dismissal, or constructive dismissal. Clients from BAME or recent migrants/refugee communities have the added difficulty when the information is conveyed to them through an interpreter. For a non-English speaker to cross examine the respondent (employer) through an interpreter is an added difficulty.

The danger of misinterpretation, cultural and conceptual difficulties which the client may convey through interpretation, may result in the wrong outcome for the client.

Many clients have to also cope with deteriorating mental health problems as a direct result of their employment experiences. There are also social/family pressures such as, the inability to support family due to loss of income, socio-economic status, level of education and literacy, disability, client perception of the Tribunal Panel, behaviour of the other side (respondent employers), client's own confidence in pursuing their claim, finance, linguistics and conceptual difficulties.

All of these factors have an impact on clients who are trying to cope with these everyday pressures as well as preparing for the tribunal hearing. It is important to take on board and acknowledge all these factors holistically in order to understand that they can all inhibit the client's ability to conduct their own representation. For there to be equality at the hearing, there must be fair and equal representation for lay clients.



Despite the lack of public funding, Solicitors, Barristers and advisers attend hearings, to provide clients with support and casework assistance, to ensure a better overall outcome for clients, Employment Tribunals are now very formal and respondents (employers) nearly always instruct counsel. Our clients are the most vulnerable and to cut them off at the point whereby assistance is most needed cannot be justified. It can be a very traumatic experience as well as a novel experience for the majority of clients.

Tribunals do their best to assist unrepresented clients but there are practical and conceptual difficulties which create a barrier. The claimants have difficulty in cross examining because they lack the skills to do so and also do not have the detachment required. It is often distressing to cross examine someone who you are accusing of dismissing you unfairly or harassment. The claimants do not understand which issues are relevant and which are not and which aspects of their cases to emphasise.