

Delivering justice: Transforming lives Annual Report 2008|09



Brent Community Law Centre
Legal action for the community



Who we are

The Law Centres Federation (LCF) represents a national network of 56 Law Centres.

Law Centres are not-for-profit legal practices providing free legal advice and representation to vulnerable and disadvantaged people. They are staffed by solicitors and barristers who specialise in areas of civil law including employment, housing, discrimination, welfare benefits, education, community care and immigration.

Law Centres are embedded in their communities and answer to committees of local people.

What we do

Law Centres advise and represent disadvantaged people when they suffer injustice, educate people about their rights and tackle local problems. In doing so, they transform people's lives, helping them to stay in their homes, keep their families together and get into employment or education.

LCF supports, develops and champions the Law Centres. It represents Law Centres with government and in other national forums. It champions the Law Centre model for delivering legal services. And it supports Law Centres, helping them to be effective and sustainable organisations.

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Chair's Report; Nick Woolf

Delivering justice: Transforming lives



Expanding and developing our work

This year, Law Centres continued to respond innovatively to the challenges they face. Our work has expanded and developed in several key areas.

London Law Centres are running three highly successful collaborative projects on youth homelessness, education and Employment Tribunal representation.

In a survey, over 70 per cent of young people helped by the Youth Homelessness Project said that their housing situation had improved.

Law Centres have also extended their work on discrimination and public legal education. Across the UK, Law Centres are working hard to develop effective partnerships to improve the delivery of legal services, based on a local ecology of provision.

Increasing support

Support for our work has also increased. The Federation has been strengthened by bringing into membership the many active student law clinics which provide pro bono services to disadvantaged people. These services give law students invaluable professional experience. This year has also seen the expansion of 'legal walks' across the country, in which legal professionals raise funds for legal services in disadvantaged communities.

Responding to challenges

Yet, the threats to Law Centres have not abated. By far the most prominent has been the challenge of maintaining an effective service within the constraints of the 'one size fits all' contract culture of the Legal Services Commission. This has been greatly exacerbated by the imposition of fixed fees in October 2007, a change in the terms of payment which has stripped Centres of their cash reserves, and a major IT failure when the Commission's new online reporting system did not work, greatly adding to the administrative burden on Centres.

As Chair of LCF, I have been active on the steering group of the Ministry of Justice's Legal Advice at Local Level study. The study has recognised many of our key concerns and we are now pushing for concrete action. In addition to participating in government initiatives, LCF is campaigning for a model of legal aid provision that is focussed – not on acts of assistance – but on turning people's lives around.

Legal advice and representation can change the course of people's lives, helping them to stay in their homes, keep their families together and get into education or employment. However, this is only possible if the system allows lawyers and advisers to focus on the

needs of the clients they see rather than the number of clients they see. Instead of top-down reforms, LCF is calling for a strategic investment in Law Centres and other grassroots advice services, both to support and strengthen existing providers and to promote effective local networks of advice.

Building a dynamic staff team

For LCF staff it has been an important year with work undertaken on strategic planning. We have a dynamic Development and Support Team which works tirelessly to provide support and services to Law Centres across the country. The new Campaigns, Advocacy and Communications Team is already showing its worth, raising the profile of Law Centres.

Together with specialist staff working on equality and young people's services, and a strengthened admin team, we have an effective staff team that is able both to advocate on behalf of Law Centres and provide them with effective practical support.

Special thanks and good wishes go to Lynn Evans, our long-serving Policy Manager, who retired this year after 30 years of service to the Law Centre movement. We are all indebted to Lynn for keeping the Law Centre torch alive.

Nick Woolf, LCF Chair

Director's Report: Julie Bishop

Championing Law Centres



LCF seeks justice for the most disadvantaged in society by supporting, developing and leading a national network of 56 Law Centres. We are a small organisation but our strength comes from the quality of the work of Law Centres and the effectiveness of the collaboration between them

Charting the way with Law Centres

In recognition of this, LCF was invited to join a number of new and significant initiatives this year to help to chart the way forward. These included:

- The Prime Minister's Council on Social Action's project on civil legal advice. This looked at the importance of the one-to-one relationship between advisers and their clients in achieving quality and a lasting outcome for the client.
- The steering and implementation committees of the Ministry of Justice's Legal Advice at Local Level study which was established to examine the impact of legal aid changes on the provision of advice.
- The Law Society's legal services, analyse the social, political and economic environment and suggest two to three long-term policy options to improve the delivery of legal services and increase access to justice.

Strengthening Law Centres

Over the last 40 years, Law Centres have developed a model for the delivery of free legal services which enables them to transform the lives of vulnerable and disadvantaged people in the UK. It is a model rooted in understanding and responding to local needs.

We know that those needs are changing as people in Britain's most deprived communities struggle to cope with many challenges, including the current recession. As a result, Law Centres pledged this year to reinvigorate and strengthen their service delivery model – to make sure that their services are meeting the challenges of the 21st century.

Strengthening LCF

LCF has also been strengthening itself this year. In addition to developing a new strategic plan, we have reviewed and reinvigorated our membership rules, our Executive Committee and its functions, our Memorandum and Articles of Association, our financial systems and procedures, our internal and external communications, and our strategic relationships with our partners and allies. We have also built a new Campaigns, Advocacy and Communications Team.

Thanks

The LCF is indebted to its funders and partners for the support it has received throughout the year. It is through this support that LCF has been able to achieve the outcomes described in this Annual Report. In particular, we would like to thank Clarissa O'Callaghan and Freshfields Bruckhaus Deringer for providing LCF with fabulous new premises in September. We would also like to say farewell and thank you to Shankari Chandran from Allen & Overy, who is returning to Australia.

She has been a great friend to Law Centres and the LCF, advocating on Law Centres' behalf at all levels in both the public and private sectors and leveraging both pro bono and financial support for Law Centres.

The future

In 2010, LCF will be committed to making sure that our work is directed to assisting Law Centres to do what they do best: using their specialist legal skills to assist the most marginalised and socially-excluded members of their communities to assert their rights and to get access to justice.

Julie Bishop, LCF Director

Young People's Project

The Young People's Project supports London Law Centres to develop young people's legal advice services. It has now been running for three years.

Thanks to the support of the Young People's Project, London Law Centres have supported approximately **7,000 young people**. The Young People's Project has established a pan-London Youth Homelessness Service and a pan-London Education Advice Service run by 14 Law Centres. Over 150 Law Centre staff and volunteers have been supported and trained through the Young People's Project. Over **1,000 youth advisers and other professionals** have been trained and supported by London Law Centres. **Over £2 million** has been secured in funding going direct to Law Centres and front line services – this funding is further topped up by contracting with the Legal Services Commission. **70-80 per cent** of case outcomes are positive. The **Rights Within Reach** report written by LCF's Mandy Wilkins and Youth Access' Pamela Verma offers a best practice guide for agencies setting up youth legal advice services. Together with Youth Access, The Howard League for Penal Reform and the Children's Rights Alliance for England, the LCF have created the **JustRights** campaign for access to justice for young people. The JustRights campaign was launched at Freshfields on 26 October 2009 by Shami Chakrabarti, Director of Liberty.

The Impact of the Youth Homelessness Project

The LCF Young People's Project recruited six law students through Law Works and Independent Academic Research Studies (IARS) to conduct interviews with 80 young people supported by the Law Centres Youth Homelessness Project. Using a tool developed by Youth Access, the interviews tracked the changes in people's lives as a result of advice.

The future

We are now fundraising to continue the work in London and roll the Project out to Law Centres across the country.

The headline results were:

- **73 per cent** reported that their **housing situation improved**
- **70 per cent** reported that their **safety and peace of mind improved**
- **86 per cent** reported that their **knowledge of where to get help improved**
- **70 per cent** reported that their **stress reduced**
- **68 per cent** reported that their **ability to deal with problems improved**
- **45 per cent** reported that their **income or money situation improved**
- **41 per cent** reported that their **involvement in education, training or employment improved**

'I am now going to university in September – all thanks to the advice I received.'

Client, London Law Centres' Youth Homelessness Project

Comments included:

'I can ask for help now – I would have suffered in silence before.'

'I don't like to think about where I would be without the advice – I would be homeless, stressed and wouldn't be sorted.'

'I felt that I could be honest with (caseworker) – she really did her best to help me and was always friendly and understanding.'



Keiley Broadhead

Case Study

Keiley Broadhead is an ex-client of Islington Law Centre's Streetlegal Project which covers five north London boroughs.

'A service like Streetlegal which is friendly and approachable is a light at the end of a dark tunnel for many young people who need help. Streetlegal was the light at the end of my tunnel when I was made homeless after my local authority repeatedly refused to help me and forever advised me to return home, even though my mother constantly refused me entry to our family home.

My school and youth workers were helpful and understanding but were unable to do anything significant with regards to my housing. My friends were always there for me to talk to but like me they were unsure of any rights I had to housing. However, Streetlegal had the legal knowledge, resources and power to help me.

After having one meeting with Streetlegal they drafted a letter and sent it to the local authority setting out all the legal rights I had to housing and the sections of law they were breaching by refusing to house me. Such rights and laws I didn't even know existed, but once the local authority received the letter I was immediately housed.

Now, six years later, I have been living in my housing association flat for four years and am settled and successful after completing my law degree and Legal Practice Course. Being housed helped me get my life and my studies back on track and I believe that without the help I received from Streetlegal the qualifications I have achieved today would have been a distant dream for me.'

Equalities Project

This year, The Equalities Project focussed on improving access to high-quality discrimination advice. It runs three groundbreaking projects.

The Equalities Project

In 2008|09, the Equalities Project focused on improving access to high quality discrimination advice for our clients, in cooperation with our partners in the advice sector through three different funded projects.

Everyone is Equal Project

This is an EU-funded project to raise awareness of discrimination issues amongst members of the public so that they are empowered to take preventative action or seek redress. The Project worked with nine Local Delivery Partners in England, Wales and Scotland to deliver 35 awareness-raising sessions. Some of the activities included training and workshops with local community groups and at conferences, music festivals, fairs and other events. On the strength of its work on this project, Devon Law Centre has been commissioned by its local authority to roll out its awareness raising activities across the county.

Working Together for Advice Discrimination Project

LCF is working with our partners in the advice sector to develop the infrastructure of discrimination advice in England.

This Project aims to improve access to discrimination advice for members of the public and build the confidence of generalist advisors to diagnose and refer discrimination clients. In 2008|09, six referral networks were set up to pilot models of discrimination advice referral. The pilots are in Northumberland, Warrington, Hampshire, Ipswich and Suffolk, Avon and Bristol and the Midlands.

A mentoring scheme to support discrimination advisors was developed in conjunction with the Bar Pro Bono Unit. The scheme matches barristers with discrimination caseworkers for counsel consultation on complex cases. In addition, an information-level training programme targeted at frontline support workers is being rolled out. The course will improve the workers' ability to identify or diagnose discrimination and to effectively signpost or refer clients as appropriate. Generalist and specialist level training in non-employment discrimination is currently being developed and will be rolled out in late 2009|10.

EHRC funded Project

2008/09, our EHRC-funded project identified, planned and delivered two training programmes to discrimination caseworkers at Law Centres. Workers were also provided with opportunities to come together to network, share information and receive pertinent updates. Michael Rubenstein, the publisher of the Equal Opportunities Review, attended one of our meetings in the summer of 2009. Acting on a request by discrimination caseworkers, a handbook on non-employment discrimination was produced for workers. Feedback on the handbook has been positive and encouraging. In addition, the EHRC is interested in adapting the framework of the handbook to train all its funded casework organisations

The future

In the next year, the Equalities Project will be working with its strategic partners to raise the profile of Law Centres and their achievements in delivering justice to vulnerable people. We plan to work with Law Centres on the implementation of the Equality Bill once it is passed into law, and provide a national approach to the development of an Equality and Diversity Strategy for the whole Federation.

‘We appreciate the work you’ve done for me and my daughter. You’ve made our dreams come true and now we are looking at life in a very positive way.’ Client, Sheffield Law Centre



Case study: Fighting disability discrimination in Sheffield

Douglas Johnson, the discrimination worker at Sheffield Law Centre, helped a man with a learning disability to save his home by using the Disability Discrimination Act and the Human Rights Act.

The man, 52, was reclusive and wasn't able to read or write. He had lived in the same house – previously his parents' – his whole life. The local council had been sending him council tax bills for many years, but staff he encountered realised he couldn't deal

with them, so eventually they wrote off the debts as being uncollectible. However, in 2008 Sheffield City Council decided to make the man bankrupt. The council tax debt was only £800 because the previous years' tax had been written off. Bankruptcy would have meant him losing all his assets – including his home.

Sheffield Law Centre helped him apply to the county court to overturn the bankruptcy order by arguing that the Council had discriminated against him unlawfully, had not assessed his exemption correctly and had breached

his human rights because it was not proportional under Article 8 of the Human Rights Act to deprive him of his home.

At the hearing on 9 June 2009, the Council accepted that the bankruptcy order should be 'annulled'. They also agreed to meet the costs of the legal action they had started and to exempt the man from paying any council tax in the future on grounds of his 'severe mental impairment'.

Case studies

Transforming Lives:



Law Centres transform the lives of vulnerable and disadvantaged people. Here are some examples of the difference a Law Centre can make:

Maureen's story

Maureen lived on an estate in London, where there were a series of arson attacks. In one, she was trapped with her two young children on the seventh floor.

The local council did nothing. So Maureen and the other residents went to Brent Community Law Centre. There, they received advice on forming a committee to approach the council.

The residents decided to withhold rent until action was taken, but the council charged Maureen for all the residents' unpaid rent. With the Law Centre's help, they won that case and managed to put pressure on the council to help them clean up the area.

Maureen's community spirit prompted the Law Centre to suggest that she become a lawyer herself, and so she did. After qualifying, she became one of the Centre's most valued lawyers. Their support changed not only her life, but those of her children and grandchildren who, inspired by her story, have excelled in their chosen careers. Maureen continues to work with the Law Centre, helping to turn other lives around.





Sandra and Robert's story

Sandra and Robert met on the web and hit it off. Sandra is American, while Robert is British and is quadriplegic. Eventually, they decided to meet face to face. It was a great success – they were very much in love. When Robert's carer died, Sandra decided to look after him, but the Home Office refused to extend her visa, meaning that she would have to return to the USA.

Fortunately they heard about Chesterfield Law Centre, which was able to persuade the Home Office to change their decision. The Law Centre also helped to get Robert and Sandra permission to marry. They are now happily married and getting on with their lives.



Jason's story

Jason was addicted to heroin. He'd been out of work for a long time, which caused a lot of stress for his family. But with help, Jason was able to end his eight-year addiction. His support worker suggested that he volunteer at a Law Centre. For Jason, volunteering was a way back into employment. Since then, he's achieved a series of qualifications and has become a mentor to new volunteers. He now has the confidence to look for paid work and he and his family are much happier.

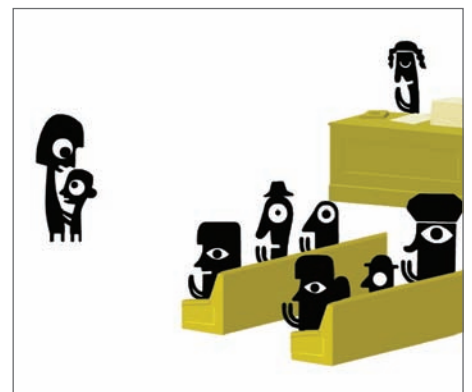


Andrew's story

Hammersmith and Fulham Law Centre brought the first ever immigration case using genetic fingerprinting developed by Sir Alec Jeffreys at Leicester University. Andrew, a young boy born in London but returned to Ghana at the age of four after his parents divorced, was refused re-entry to the UK on the grounds that he was not a British citizen.

The Law Centre used the executive power of the local MP to prevent the child's removal and set about trying to prove he was his mother's son. After 21 months, two days of hearings, three major blood tests and 500 pages of evidence, the DNA evidence won the day and Andrew was allowed to stay.

Dr Jeffreys later told the Law Centre that for the next two years people turned up at his house and office, besieging him with requests for DNA testing.



Delivering Justice

Law Centres deliver justice for their clients. Here are three examples of the difference expert legal advice and representation makes:

Birmingham Law Centre

Birmingham Law Centre successfully challenged their local authority's policy on breaks for carers. The Law Centres' clients had been reassessed by the local authority and each told that they would receive fewer days of respite care. One client was told that he would receive 42 days of respite care per year instead of 92.

Birmingham Law Centre issued proceedings in the High Court against the local authority. As a result, the policy was suspended pending a review that will now include full consultation with their clients as well as other interested parties.

Devon Law Centre

The Asylum Appellate Project, run by Devon Law Centre, aims to show that reform of the legal aid system is needed for asylum seekers to get access to justice. Over the past two years, it has found that 79 per cent of asylum seekers are being wrongly denied publicly-funded legal representation (legal aid).

In one case, a woman was forced to flee China because of her trade union activities which had seen her detained and tortured in a forced labour camp for over two years. She was initially refused asylum by the Home Office and then refused legal aid by her solicitors to appeal this decision. Appearing unrepresented at the tribunal hearing, her asylum appeal was turned down. After the Project assisted her to get legal representation to challenge the tribunal's determination, she was granted asylum.

Sheffield Law Centre

Sheffield Law Centre helped a disabled young man to challenge the Royal Bank of Scotland over disabled access. In January 2009, the young man was granted an injunction, ordering the bank to install wheelchair access at his local branch in Sheffield.

This was the first time a court had ever granted an injunction requiring building work as a 'reasonable adjustment' under the Disability Discrimination Act. The Bank was also ordered to pay the young man £6,500 (plus interest) in compensation for the way he had been treated. This is the highest award to date for this type of case outside the employment field. The case goes to the Court of Appeal in November 2009.

Bringing Law Centres Together: LCF Conference 2008

Last year's LCF Conference was held at the Radisson SAS Hotel Birmingham. The LCF were delighted that 35 Law Centres were able to join us. The theme was Future Perfect: Law Centres into the 21st Century. Lord Bach, Minister for Legal Aid, addressed the conference and keynote speeches were delivered by Mike Dailly from Govan Law Centre and Les Allamby from Law Centre Northern Ireland. The conference gave Law Centres the opportunity to exchange ideas, pool their experience and resources, and chart a common path forwards.

Location of Law Centres

Law Centres in England, Wales and Northern Ireland:

London Law Centres

- Barnet Law Centre
- Battersea Law Centre (part of South West London Law Centres)
- Brent Community Law Centre
- Cambridge House Law Centre
- Camden Community Law Centre
- Central London Law Centre
- Cross Street Law Centre (formerly Thamesmead Law Centre)
- Croydon and Sutton Law Centre (part of South West London Law Centres)
- Greenwich Community Law Centre
- Hackney Community Law Centre
- Hammersmith and Fulham Law Centre
- Haringey Law Centre
- Hillingdon Law Centre
- Hounslow Law Centre
- Islington Law Centre
- Kingston and Richmond Law Centre (part of South West London Law Centres)
- Lambeth Law Centre
- Merton Law Centre (part of South West London Law Centres)
- North Kensington Law Centre
- Paddington Law Centre
- Plumstead Community Law Centre
- Southwark Law Centre
- Springfield Law Centre
- Streetwise Community Law Centre
- Tower Hamlets Law Centre
- Wandsworth and Merton Law Centre (part of South West London Law Centres)



The Campaigns, Advocacy and Communications Team

Influencing Decision-Makers

Delivering justice

One in five people in the UK live in poverty. Legal aid celebrated its 60th anniversary in 2009, yet the need to make sure that the UK's most vulnerable and disadvantaged people get access to justice has rarely been greater. As the recession hit, Law Centres have tackled a significant increase in demand from people seeking to protect their livelihoods, ensure shelter and heating for their families, and education and food for their children. UNICEF reports that the UK is low in the league in beating child poverty. More than 20 per cent of children and young people are not in education, training or employment.

Against this backdrop, the Campaigns, Advocacy and Communications Team has sought to make sure that the voices of the UK's most vulnerable communities, families and children are heard in the corridors of power. Now, more than ever, it is vital that civil legal aid reaches those who need it most.

Tackling legal aid reform

Law Centres therefore contributed to the Ministry of Justice review of the provision of legal aid at local level. LCF submitted evidence from an independent study we commissioned which demonstrated the impact of the unified contract on Law Centres. Key findings included:

- The contract's new arrangements have put immense cash flow pressure on Law Centres, which have noted a subsequent 70 per cent reduction in reserves;
- The introduction of the fixed fee payment system has led to a large fall in average time spent per case in all areas except for immigration.

The realities of legal service provision and the views of clients were also represented at LCF steering group meetings with the Ministry of Justice and other key stakeholders. This helped to influence the Ministry of Justice to announce in June 2009 that it would:

- Consider the needs of the most vulnerable with complex cases
- Review the administrative cost of the new legal aid system
- Examine reinforcing second-tier support.

Speaking out on human rights

Evidence of how Law Centres address complex and often multiple violations in human rights contributed to the UK's Human Rights Inquiry, and we provided expertise to help develop indicators for an equality measurement framework.

Building the campaigning capacity of Law Centres

It was a year of internal change with a new team recruited. At the time of writing, the team has formulated plans, organised an event at the House of Lords to launch animations illustrating the impact of Law Centres' work, responded to government consultations, and lobbied successfully for better access to justice for immigrants and asylum seekers. We ensured that the voices of vulnerable children and adults who had been trafficked, or had immigrated to escape abuse, were listened to. We are promoting the importance of the one-to-one relationship between advice workers and their clients in achieving quality and a lasting outcome for the client through research conducted with the Prime Minister's Council on Social Action.

‘The social welfare component of legal aid is one of my key priorities. And the work Law Centres do is absolutely central to this.’ Lord Bach

The future

We will continue to assist Law Centres to make sure the voices of communities, families and children are heard so that Law Centres can continue to help them to realise their rights, and ensure that civil legal aid is channelled in the most efficient way to those who need it most. To do this, we will take stock of previous significant achievements by Law Centres and LCF staff, especially Lynn Evans, and construct an effective campaigns strategy and vehicles. We aim to create a strengthened movement for change of government policy and practice, which provides an enabling environment for access to justice. We will do this with clients, old and new partners across Law Centres, NGOs, business and partners in government and parliament.



Law Centres on YouTube

In July, LCF launched a series of YouTube videos showing how Law Centres transform people's lives.

The videos were shown to an invited audience of Ministers and MPs at the House of Lords on 14 July 2009 at an event hosted by the Legal Aid Minister, Lord Bach. At the event, Lord Bach said: ‘The social welfare component of legal aid is one of my key priorities. And the work Law Centres do is absolutely central to this.’

The event's aim was to show decision-makers that Law Centres provide a human service, changing the course of their clients' lives, helping them to stay in their homes, keep their families together and get into employment or education.

The Development and Support Team

Developing Law Centres' Services

The Development and Support department of LCF has consolidated its work over the past year following the restructuring that had taken place in 2008 and the expansion of the organisation's development and support work.

We are now a team of eight people although we were very sorry to see the departure of Minaxi Panchal in September after five years' working at LCF. Minaxi has decided to become a consultant and develop her own business. She leaves a legacy of a number of training courses that we will continue to use in our work with Law Centres.

We welcomed Sarah Duvigneau as Monitoring and Information Officer in June 2009. Funded by London Councils Sarah will assist Law Centres and the LCF in recording and monitoring projects and other work.

Co-ordinating regional and other forums

Law Centres continued to come together during the year via our Member Network Meetings. Network Meetings are now established in the following regions:

- London
- The North East
- The North West
- East Midlands
- West Midlands

Network Meetings are an opportunity for LCF staff to engage with Law Centres and to discuss relevant developments in Law Centre services and funding matters. The meetings encourage the sharing of information and the sharing of best practice.

More recently we have established an admin and finance group at the request of Law Centres. The purpose of this group is to examine and establish common systems across Law Centres.

Assisting Law Centres with funding

The Development and Support Team has encouraged and assisted Law Centres to achieve the best they possibly can in terms of funding. We notify Law Centres of upcoming funding opportunities and subscribe to an email alert service on their behalf.

Over the past six months there have been two major funding rounds from the Equalities and Human Rights Commission and the Office for the Third Sector Hardship Fund. Many Law Centres submitted funding applications to both of these funding streams. At the time of writing we are awaiting the outcome. Funding advice has also been given to individual Law Centres for one-off projects or infrastructure.

Representing Law Centres

Representing Law Centres on a number of fora is a major part of the Development and Support Team's work. Noeleen Adams represents the LCF on all representative body meetings with the Legal Services Commission, the Law Society and London Councils. Noeleen also represents the Third Sector Alliance on the London Mayor's London Strategic Migration Partnership.

Myles Kunzli represents London Law Centres on the London Advice Forum, London Debt Summit, the Mayor's benefit take-up campaign and the Plenet Steering Group. Myles also attended a number of seminars representing LCF at the British Institute of Human Rights. Stella Russell represents the LCF on the Welsh National Advice Forum and the South West Advice Alliance. Cathy Gallagher was appointed a trustee on the North West Legal Support Trust Board in 2009 and is the not-for-profit representative.

The Development and Support Team also represents Law Centres at many meetings and consultations with funders, local authorities and other bodies, for example regulatory or quality control.

The Development and Support Team

Responding to the Legal Aid Reforms

A large part of our work over the past year has been keeping abreast of the changes to legal aid implemented by the Legal Services Commission (LSC). The fixed fee regime has impacted severely on Law Centres and a substantial amount of work has gone into making sure Law Centres survive and are sustainable. We have worked with Law Centres making sure their concerns, comments and criticisms are raised at appropriate meetings and in consultations. Over 50 per cent of our work this past year was devoted to dealing with the implications of the LSC Unified Contract on Law Centres.

Getting Ready for 2010 Contracting

At the time of writing we are working extremely hard to prepare Law Centres for the complete retendering of Legal Help Contracts in late 2009 early 2010. The new contracts will instigate new ways of delivering legal help via consortia working and separate contracts for other areas of law.

The LCF has commissioned guidance and agreements for Law Centres to use and provided training in Manchester and London for members to attend and gain knowledge and information as to how to plan their future service delivery.

Preparing for CLACs and CLANs

The LSC continued to develop plans for the tendering of Community Legal Advice Centres (CLACs) and Community Legal Advice Networks (CLANs). The Development and Support Team has had major involvement in four such initiatives:

- Gloucester CLAN
- Manchester CLACs
- Barking & Dagenham CLAC
- Wales



Training for 2010

The LCF training, 'Getting Ready for Tendering in 2010' took place in July 2009 in Manchester and London. The training was aimed at individuals responsible for the preparation of Law Centre bids and finance workers. It was delivered by David Gilmore of DG Legal.

In feedback after the London session, 100 per cent of respondents were positive about the training, and 84 per cent said they were now confident to tender.

Comments from participants:
 'Very useful, bang up to date. Helps to focus on key issues.'
 'Very good training. Clarified a lot of issues. Made me aware of preparatory work I can get on with now.'
 'Excellent and informative. Necessary preparation identified and explained.'

Other training this year included our tailored Management Training Course, our Governance Training funded by the Big Lottery BASIS fund, one-to-one coaching and planning away days.

The Development and Support Team

Working in Partnership

Partnership Working

Manchester

Law Centres in Manchester have been active in the resurgent Manchester Community Legal Services Partnership (MCLASP) which launched in October 2009. The project is funded by the Big Lottery Advice + 2 funding stream. MCLASP aims to improve referrals, co-ordinate access to front-line services across the city and strengthen the voice of the not-for-profit sector in the development of an advice strategy in Manchester.

The LCF have been active in a process working group, in providing support and information particularly in relation to legal issues and 2010 contracting and in linking Law Centres with Advice UK partnership projects in Manchester.

Rochdale

Rochdale Law Centre is one of three key partners in the Rochdale Advice + 2 Project, whose aim is to steer a systematic and integrated referral process to improve access for clients. Other Law Centres leading on BIG Lottery funded Advice Plus projects are:

- North Kensington
- Tower Hamlets
- South West London Law Centres
- Nottingham
- Sheffield

Project Working

Working Together for Advice

The Advice Services Alliance (ASA) leads on this partnership project consisting of the major advice networks working together on a number of cross-sectoral workstreams for the benefit of members and their clients. The workstreams are:

Developing Access to Advice:

- Looking at ways of improving access to advice services for those with the greatest need.

User and Stakeholder Involvement:

- Investigating how to better involve users of advice services.

Enhancing Frontline Advice:

- Delivering direct support for partnership working amongst members.

Developing a Quality Mark:

- Developing a replacement quality standard for generalist advice agencies.

Advice Outcomes:

- Designing an outcomes measurement system for Law Centres to better demonstrate the value of their work.

Developing Discrimination Advice:

- LCF leads on this important workstream offering training and improved working arrangements between advice agencies working in this field.

Workforce Development:

- Enabling the advice sector to access qualifications and accreditation and training.

Promoting Advice:

- Establishing an England-wide celebration and promotion of advice.

London Councils

Working in partnership with Policy & Voice and AdviceUK London, this project provides a representative voice for Law Centres in London. It provides second tier support to frontline Law Centres, offering training, facilitating network meetings and sharing best practice.

In addition, we provide second tier services to London Law Centres, providing developmental support to those Law Centres funded by London Councils.

The LCF is also lead partner in the London Law Centres Tribunal Representation Project. Funded by London Councils, this project seeks to improve access to legal advice in employment law. 14 Law Centres participate in the project.

Big Lottery BASIS

In partnership with AdviceUK, the BASIS project provides one-to-one training and mentoring for Management Committee and Board members of Law Centres.

Summarised financial statements

Statement of Financial Activities

These summarised financial statements contain information from both the Statement of Financial Activities and the Balance Sheet for the year ended 31 March 2009, but are not the full statutory report and accounts. The full financial statements were approved by the Executive Committee on 10 August 2009 and subsequently submitted to the Charity Commission and to Companies House. They received an unqualified audit report and copies may be obtained from the charity's head office.

Signed on behalf of the Executive Committee

Sean Canning, Treasurer
10 August 2009

We have examined the summarised financial statements which comprise the summary statement of financial activities and the summary balance sheet.

The Executive Committee members are responsible for preparing the summarised financial statements in accordance with United Kingdom law and the recommendations of the charities SORP.

Our responsibility is to report to you our opinion on the consistency of the summarised financial statement with the full financial statements and Executive Committee's Annual Report. We also read the other information contained in the Annual Report and consider the implications for our report if we become aware of any apparent misstatements or material inconsistencies with the summarised financial statements.

We conducted our work on accordance with Bulletin 1999/6 'the auditors' statement on the summary financial statement' issued by the Auditing Practices Board for use in the United Kingdom. Our report on the organisation's full annual financial statements describes the basis of our audit opinion on the financial statements.

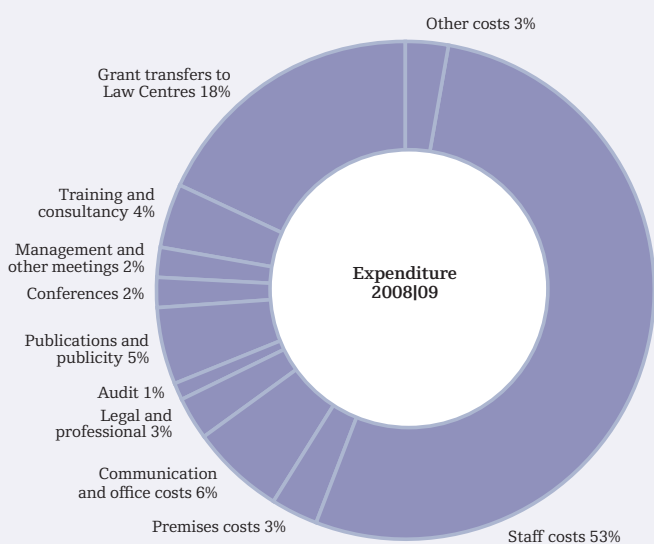
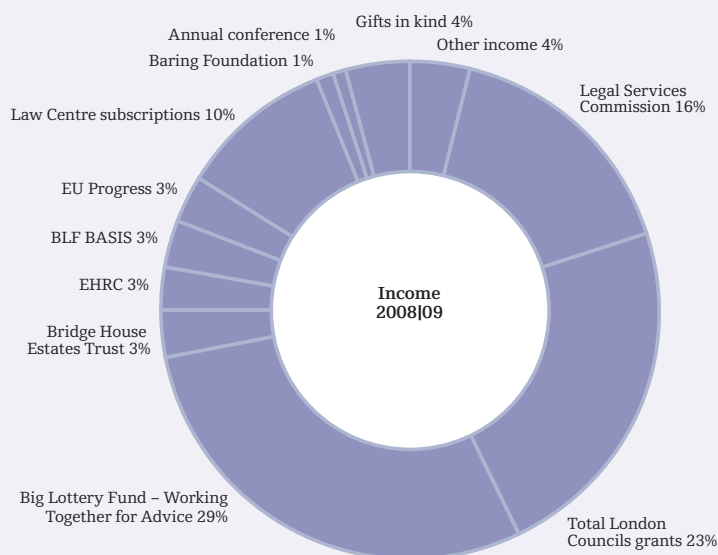
In our opinion the summarised financial statements are consistent with the full annual financial statements and the Executive Committee's Annual Report of Law Centres Federation for the year ended 31 March 2009.

Sayer Vincent
27 August 2009

Chartered Accountants & Registered Auditors London

Law Centres Federation (limited by guarantee)
Balance Sheet as at March 2009

	2009	2008
	£	£
Tangible fixed assets	-	1,232
Current assets		
Debtors	611	24,515
Trade Debtors	21,346	14,000
Cash at bank and in hand	388,535	227,643
	410,492	266,158
Deferred Income	118,644	59,700
Creditors: Amounts falling due within one year	113,875	156,145
Net current assets	177,973	111,245
Net assets	177,973	111,245
Funds		
Restricted funds		
In surplus	84,143	40,733
In deficit	-	(67)
Unrestricted funds		
Designated funds	-	-
General fund	93,830	70,579
Total funds	177,973	111,245



Income Annual Report 2009

	2009 £	2008 £
Legal Services Commission	166,000	165,605
Total London Councils Grants	234,613	85,876
Big Lottery Fund – Working Together for Advice	293,827	75,326
Bridge House Estates Trust	31,500	22,500
EHRC	35,666	–
BLF BASIS	35,116	–
EU Progress 2	31,850	–
Law Centre Subscriptions	99,841	90,723
Baring Foundation	12,625	–
Annual conference	11,985	5,464
Gifts in Kind	37,107	–
Other Income	39,191	41,364
Disability Rights	–	767,652
Legal Support Trust	–	5,000
Ebury Securities	–	48,000
	1,029,320	1,307,510
Notes 1 Other Income		
Law firm donations	3,800	6,000
Interest	1,695	1,035
City Parochial Foundation	12,500	25,000
CitA Progress1	2,927	–
Training fees	3,140	6,540
Total	24,062	38,575
Notes 2 London Councils		
London Councils Transition	12,535	–
London Councils	53,126	85,876
London Councils Employment Tribunal	168,952	–
Total London Councils Grants	234,613	85,876

Expenditure Annual Report 2009

	2009 £	2008 £
Staff costs	497,683	410,948
Premises costs	32,042	31,500
Communication & office costs	52,868	43,771
Legal and professional	28,886	11,835
Audit	10,810	7,026
Publications & publicity	43,095	23,803
Conferences	17,139	14,504
Management and other meetings	14,982	8,304
Training and consultancy	33,984	4,589
Grant Transfers to Law Centres	172,706	722,242
Other Costs	30,563	23,239
Stockport Law Centre Provision	–	7,000
LawWorks prior year adjustment	–	1,409
Housekeeping	–	(66)
Total resources expended	934,758	1,310,105
Note Other Costs		
Bank charges	308	330
Website Development	250	–
Other Project Costs	1,754	2,219
Depreciation	1,230	1,731
Financial Review	3,784	–
Insurance	1,520	1,557
Refurbishment provision	–	17,402
Total	8,845	23,239

LCF Executive Committee and Staff

LCF Executive Committee and Staff for 2008|09 (appointed 21 Nov 2008)

Officers

Chair

Nick Woolf
Management Committee
Saltley and Nechells Law Centre

Vice Chair

Ruth Hayes
Staff
Islington Law Centre

Vice Chair

Nick Whittingham
Management Committee
Kirklees Law Centre

Treasurer

Sean Canning
Staff
North Kensington Law Centre

Secretary

Laura Melbourne
Staff
Surrey Law Centre

Management Committee

Representatives

Ruth Appleton
Hackney Community Law Centre

Reita Clarke MBE
Luton Law Centre

Hugh Lansdowne
Lambeth Law Centre
(appointed 6 July 2009)

John Oke
Camden Community Law Centre

Staff Representatives

Keith Bennett
Cambridgeshire Law Centres /
Advice for Life (resigned)

Paul im Thurn
Community Law Centre, Carlisle

Gillian Sharp
Luton Law Centre

Maureen Vincent
Brent Community Law Centre

Teresa Waldron
Chesterfield Law Centre

LCF Staff



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Funders and Sponsors

Grants and Donations:

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 City Bridge Trust
 City Parochial Foundation
 Equality and Human Rights Commission
 European Union
 Legal Services Commission
 London Councils

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The Baring Foundation



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 Irwin Mitchell LLP
 Legal Action Group
 Lovells
 The Honourable Society of Gray's Inn



Herbert Smith

For every £1 spent by Law Centres on a typical housing case, £10 of 'social value' is created through benefits to the local community and savings to the government. Every eviction avoided by Law Centres is estimated to save the taxpayer over £34,000.



www.lawcentres.org.uk

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