

Networking...

The national voice of Law Centres

The 'Law is Local'

Our conference this year was attended by over 120 delegates from Law Centres. The conference theme the 'Law is Local' encompassed everything from Law Centres' relationship with local government, likely areas of expansion such as family and community care law, through to debates on the value of the new CLACs and CLANs idea which has been floated by the Legal Services Commission.

In a presentation at the start of the conference we argued that the ideal for social welfare law is pretty near the Ontario system in which a statutory state funded service undertakes both strategic and casework with communities that have democratic control over the overall direction of the service. We will continue to argue for this, as we have done for over 30 years. Law Centres and LCF recognise though that we inevitably have to continue to engage on a more pragmatic level with government funders and others in order to continue to exist.

Bridget Prentice, the Legal Aid Minister, was the keynote speaker at our conference. She gave a wide ranging speech on the 'Law is Local' theme. She argued strongly in favour of the proposals contained in the recently published White Paper on the regulation of the legal professions as she believed they would open up legal services more to consumers by



LCF believes the proposed "Alternative Business Structure" (ABS) or "multi disciplinary practice model" outlined in the paper would work well for Law Centres and the rest of the NfP sector. We do though have concerns about the structure in the private sector and its potential to compromise the independence of the legal professions. LCF will publish a response to the White Paper which will highlight this.

Bridget Prentice had presided at the official opening of Kirklees Law Centre a few weeks before our conference. The numbers of Law Centres have expanded and the size of existing Law Centres has grown in the last five years. This expansion and growth has mainly been due to increased funding from the Legal Services Commission. If the LSC carries out their promise to reduce bureaucracy, and as long as the amount they are willing to pay to procure these services remains viable, it is likely that this expansion will continue. The preferred supplier and peer review initiatives are both factors that are likely to assist with this.

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What many Law Centres told LCF at the conference confirmed the rumour we'd also been hearing, which is that the LSC is having discussions with a number of local authorities with a view to establishing pilot Community Legal and Advice Centres (CLACs). This is of course all happening in advance of the Commission publishing the final strategy for the CLS.

In my view there is an implicit warning contained in the LSC's consultation paper on its strategy for the CLS, 'Making Legal Rights a Reality'. The total number of contractors might well be reduced as contracts are brought under one CLAC supplier for each urban area. A process of consolidation is in any event likely over the next few years as contractors including Law Centres become preferred suppliers while the agencies which are not awarded this status are dropped by the Commission.

In order to keep their existing contracts with the LSC it seems likely that every Law Centre will eventually have to become a CLAC or part of the alternative available for existing organisations the 'Community Legal Advice Network' (CLAN). Of course, there is 'a third way' which is to give up LSC work and rely on other sources of funding.

Putting aside considerations about engaging or not with the CLAC concept, currently much casework and wider social policy work is paid for from public funds other than the LSC. Local councils still provide over half of the funding for Law Centres, paying for work that does not qualify for legal aid and most importantly the strategic work that is needed to tackle systemic problems. One of the liveliest sessions was the 'Law is Local' debate in which delegates heard from Alan Beith MP, Stella Manzie (Chief Executive, Coventry Council), Ruth Hayes (Director, Islington Law Centre) and Viv Kendrick (Kirklees MBC). These speakers spoke on the important links Law Centres have with local councils as funders and the need to ensure legal services are tailored to local needs.

LCF now has a pro-active role around fund raising for Law Centres to provide services other than those funded by the LSC. The emergency motion on the governance arrangements to

allow LCF to contract with Law Centres could be one of the most far reaching decisions to come out of the conference. The LCF Executive Committee will be consulting with Law Centres over this in the coming weeks.

LCF is currently negotiating with the Big Lottery, DTI, the equalities commissions and other funders. We are optimistic that new funding streams will come on line to add to the two recent successful bids led by Noeleen Adams (London Regional Unit Manager), the Sexual Orientation Religion and Belief Project announced last month and the "Change Up" grants to improve facilities in London Law Centres.

A priority is to develop funding streams around discrimination law. The lead up to the establishment of the Commission for Equality and Human Rights provides opportunities to do this. At a local level, we hope, Law Centres will increasingly become Human Rights and Equalities Centres, playing a leading role in promoting these rights to communities and engaging in other systemic work, as well as giving the legislation its cutting edge through litigating cases.

Given the likely debate over the white paper on the regulation of the legal professions and LCF's increasing pursuit of funding opportunities, the overwhelming endorsement by the conference of the statement from Brent Community Law Centre on protecting professional standards, particularly independence, was timely. Our movement needs to be ambitious in its goal of expanding legal services to disadvantaged communities through the Law Centre model, but this must not be achieved by sacrificing the ideals and values we stand for.

Steve Hynes
Director of the Law Centres Federation

A copy of the LCF's response to 'Making Legal Rights A Reality' is on the LCF website: lawcentres.org.uk.

If you would like a copy of the Minister's speech please contact Emma at: emma@lawcentres.org.uk.



Alan Beith MP and Steve Hynes, LCF Director



Gillie Sharp, LCF Chair with Stella Manzie, Chief Executive of Coventry City Council

Bridget Prentice MP, Minister for Legal Aid at the DCA



Ruth Hayes, Director, Islington Law Centre



Viv Kendrick, Kirklees Metropolitan Council

LCF Annual Conference The 'Law is Local' 2005

Legal Services

AJA Public Meeting

The Access to Justice Alliance (AJA) is organising a parliamentary public meeting on Monday **12th December**, starting at 6.30pm. The meeting will take place in the Attlee Room at Portcullis House, London SW1A 2LW.

The meeting will be chaired by Sadiq Khan MP and there will be an all party platform of speakers, including Lord Falconer (Labour), Oliver Heald (Conservative) and David Heath (Liberal Democrat), together with Roy Morgan from the Legal Aid Practitioners Group and Carol Storer from Shelter.

The AJA is calling for the legal aid budget to be properly resourced, and for the civil legal aid budget to be protected so that it cannot be used to cover rising expenditure on criminal legal aid.

A leaflet about the campaign has been emailed to each Law Centre.

The Access to Justice Alliance can be contacted c/o PLP, 266 - 268 Holloway Road, London N7 6NE. Email: accesstojustice2005@yahoo.co.uk

More on campaigns

The Law Society president, Kevin Martin has stated that legal aid is going to be a priority issue during his term of office. There are two campaigns, 'Defending Legal Aid' and 'Stop Retrospective Funding' which is directed specifically at immigration practitioners. Further information on the Law Society's website: lawsociety.org.uk.

Legal aid lawyers met MPs at Portcullis House on 26th October. The meeting was organised by the South London Law Society. Bridget Prentice, the Minister for legal aid attended part of the meeting and responded to questions. She said that the DCA was asking the Treasury for more money, but the Department would still have to cut costs and that the government did not intend to ring-fence the civil legal aid budget. Delegates left the meeting feeling that it was going to be a long campaign.

This month the Society of Labour Lawyers hope to pass a resolution at their AGM on 8th December to further their objectives in their pamphlet, 'Furthering Justice'. It reads:

'Based on the collective experience of many of our members as Legal Aid and Human Rights lawyers, we believe that money spent on public funding of legal services will save money for the Treasury by reducing the demands made on other departmental budgets such as health, welfare and law & order.

Accordingly, the Society of Labour Lawyers calls on the Department of Constitutional Affairs and the Legal Services Commission:

- To commission the necessary research to examine the widely held belief that proper spending on civil justice will ensure a net saving of Government expenditure by tackling problems of social exclusion at source,
- and
- To develop the Community Legal Service into an effective national network ensuring access to civil justice for all, whereby everyone has easy access to local general advice centres supported by on-line and telephone advice services, where local advisors (1st Tier) are able to refer citizens to appropriate dispute resolution or specialist advice services (2nd Tier) and where affordable legal representation (3rd Tier) is available to assist with any disputes that remain unresolved.'

There is a further resolution to establish a Northern Branch of the Society. Guest Speaker is Trevor Phillips, chair of the CRE. Information about the Society is at: soclablaw.org.uk.

Peer Review goes onward...

The Legal Services Commission has revised Peer Review in light of the consultation carried out earlier this year. They report that in the new process, 'a senior panel member, taken from the existing panel of peer reviewers, will consider representations against a peer review rating with the original peer reviewer.'

There are about 80 Peer Reviewers at the moment and the LSC plan to recruit more and add new categories of law, 'to expand the process to all publicly-funded categories of law.'

Peter Watson, Director of the LSC Supplier Development Group said, '*Peer Review will provide the foundation for our Preferred Supplier strategy....Peer Review has been recognised by the profession as the best mechanism to assess the quality of work conducted by providers and is supporting the development of other, 'quality of advice' tools, for example, file assessment and quality profiles.*'

Legal Aid Impact

The DCA has introduced a 'legal aid impact' test in order to cost the effect of government policy changes on the courts and legal aid scheme. All Government Departments are now required to inform the DCA's legal aid team if they are developing proposals that involve new criminal sanctions or civil penalties.

A legal aid impact test will now be part of the way government develops policy. The test will be added to the Regulatory Impact Assessment process. That means that if another Government Department is thinking about new legislation, the DCA will now be able to suggest alternatives to regulation or obtain commitments from that Department to meet the costs of any new burden on the legal aid budget.

Future of Legal Services

In October 2005, the Department for Constitutional Affairs published a White Paper, '**The Future of Legal Services: Putting Consumers First.**' The paper follows on from the report presented to the Lord Chancellor by Sir David Clementi last year and proposes the creation of a Legal Services Board, and an Office for Legal Complaints. The new Legal Services Board will be able to authorise Front Line Regulators, such as the Law Society and the Bar to carry out day to day regulation. The LCF has been in discussion with the Department and with the Law Society, which currently regulates the legal casework provided in Law Centres. The White Paper proposes bringing the not-for-profit sector within the regulatory scope of the Legal Services Board and the ABS (Alternative Business Structures) licensing scheme. One of the conditions will be having in place appropriate arrangements '*to ensure that the consumer's interest in respect of their right to legal professional privilege is maintained and safeguarded.*'

Review of Tribunals

The Department for Constitutional Affairs announced a major review of the role of tribunal members this month. They are looking at what each type of member can contribute and will be looking initially on the role of non-legal members. The unified Tribunals Service will be launched in April 2006.

Court Fees

The deadlines for responding to the Department for Constitutional Affairs consultation concluded in November. Additional fees are being considered in order to raise an extra £50 million from court users in order to make the courts self financing.

The Constitutional Affairs Committee has published a report urging the Government to review the maximum limits set on the small claims system in the county courts. The Committee has decided £2,500 would be a sensible limit for both personal injury and housing disrepair, without impeding access to justice. The Better Regulation Task Force has recommended £5,000.

Fixed Fees

The LSC announced in October that they intend to extend tailored fixed fees to April 2007. Karl Damien, Director of Contract Design said, *'Continuing the tailored fixed fee scheme until April 2007 will provide stability and enable us (the LSC) to continue our discussions to ensure views are fed into the proposals for future funding arrangements, which are likely to include a move to standard fees.'*

Use of Counsels' Opinion

Updated guidance on copyright and confidentiality issues has been issued by the Law Society. Visit: lawsociety.org.uk/professional/conduct/guidance.

Law Centre News

Law Centres have been much in the news recently. For example, there was an article in the Independent Lawyer about the Isle of Wight Law Centre and an article by Paul Heron from Lewisham Law Centre about his visit to Law Centres in New York and Los Angeles in Legal Action Bulletin. Law Centres have also been winning more prizes....

Trophy for Bury

Bury Law Centre won the Guardian's Public Service Award for Finance under their Innovation and Progress category. After a difficult start, Bury Law Centre has gone from strength to strength. In the last year they have obtained five charitable grants and were successful in obtaining £100,000 for the National Lottery for three years to provide advice in debt and welfare benefits. The report in the Guardian on the 30th November spoke about their plans for the future which includes setting up a website, providing a training programme for law students who work as volunteers, and recruiting more volunteer pro bono solicitors and advisers to increase the services offered. John Nicholson, former manager of the Centre, commented, 'The hardest part was the continual drain of putting in bids for funding and not knowing from day to day whether the future was assured, but there is now a long-term commitment and the Law Centre is now a viable, valuable and visionary community service.'

Award for Avon and Bristol Law Centre

On 25th October, the **Bright Project** based at Avon and Bristol Law Centre won an Innovation in the Community award from AOL. The award was presented by AOL's Chief Executive and was hosted by Lord St John of Bletso. Their award was one of three projects in the South West who won the awards which were presented to them in the House of Lords. It was a great event. Commenting after the visit, Lucia Gillespie, Project Liaison Officer said, *'It took place in a beautiful room overlooking the Thames with afternoon tea including cucumber sandwiches minus the crusts, scones, delicately prepared cakes and proper china cups! It was great to see so many other community groups there and to learn about various ventures throughout the country.'*

Don't Forget !

You can also download Networking from the LCF website: lawcentres.org.uk

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The Bright Project was given £2,000 to use in an innovative way and they have purchased two laptop computers to enable them to go out and work with their community groups more intensively rather than being based at the office. They will then loan these laptops out to community groups when the Project ends.

New Members

Two new Law Centres were welcomed into membership at the LCF Annual General Meeting on 11th November. These were **Rotherham Law Centre** and **Streetwise Community Law Centre**. Rotherham can be contacted on 01709 838 988 and Streetwise on 020 8778 5854. Kirklees Law Centre became independent of the LCF on the 20th October and also became a full member at the AGM.



Bridget Prentice MP cutting the ribbon at the opening of Kirklees Law Centre on 25th October 2005

AGMs

South West London Law Centre held their AGM on 21st November in Croydon Town Hall. Their guest speaker was **Bridget Prentice**, the Legal Aid Minister at the Department for Constitutional Affairs. She spoke very highly of Law Centres, saying '*Law Centres play a key role in providing publicly funded legal services to some of the most vulnerable and disadvantaged in society*'. She also spoke about legal aid in general, saying that it was, '*one of the pillars of the welfare state and as much a pillar as schools and the NHS....Legal aid helps create the kind of society in which we all want live - a fair, decent and safe society*'.

The Minister also spoke at Coventry and Lewisham Law Centres' AGMs.

There have been numerous Law Centre AGMs this autumn - all with great annual reports.

Central London Law Centre for example celebrated their 25th anniversary in October and have produced an annual report highlighting their many successes over the years. Wandsworth and Merton Law Centre reported on the development of a sub regional service.



Croydon & Sutton Law Centre workers (left to right) Shereen Samara (Equality Co-ordinator), Maria Sanchez (Immigration), Gail Donnoghue (Administrator), Nick Turner (Housing) Cherry Young (Benefits Appeals)

Kingston & Richmond Law Centre workers (left to right) Abed Natur (Immigration), Jo Underwood (Young People's Solicitor), Mark Gough (Employment), Kate Pasfield (Trainee), Janet Bishop (Housing) and Duncan Brown (Volunteer Solicitor).



They report, '*We made excellent progress in the development of the sub regional service during the year. We have opened new offices in Kingston (to serve Kingston and Richmond) delivering services in employment, benefits, housing and education, and Croydon (to serve Croydon and Sutton) delivering services in housing.*'

The Law Centre aims next year to continue to work in partnership with front line agencies in each borough to provide an integrated advice service.

Law Centre (Northern Ireland) has also published a development plan for 2005 to 2008. In addition to their four core areas of work: social security, employment, immigration and community care, the Law Centre aims to secure funding to establish a mental health legal service, establish hospital-based mental health legal advice clinics and provide training and information for local agencies to help build capacity in the area. The Law Centre also identified an unmet need for environmental law advice. They intend therefore to explore the advisability and feasibility of developing pilot services in this area.

Law Centres on the move..

Three Law Centres have moved recently. **Leicester Law Centre** has moved to 20 Millstone Lane, Leicester LE1 5JN - their new telephone number is 0116 242 1160. **Devon Law Centre** has moved to 2nd Floor, Fox House, 8-10 Whimble Street, Plymouth PL1 2DH and **Luton Law Centre** has moved to 6th Floor, Cresta House, Alma Street, Luton LU1 2PL. Their telephone numbers remain the same.

Haringey Law Centre

On 29th September it was agreed at Tottenham Law Centre's AGM that the Law Centre should change its name to "Haringey Law Centre" to reflect their provision of legal services to all the people of Haringey.



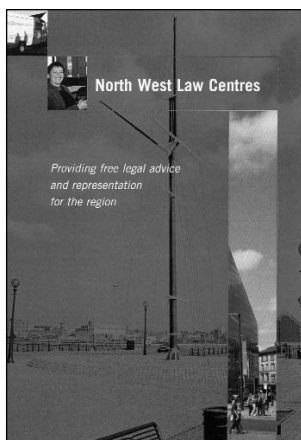
Gary Kirwan (Haringey Law Centre chair) with Lynn Featherstone MP

The guest speaker was the new MP for Hornsey and Wood Green, Lynn Featherstone, from the Liberal Democrat party. Lynn spoke passionately about the need for clients in her constituency to have access to good legal advice and assistance and the vital role that the Law Centre plays in providing this.

North West Law Centres

The LCF has published a directory which profiles the twelve Law Centres based in the North West of England.

A copy is enclosed in this mailing



The 'Law is Local'

Steve Hynes, LCF Director has reported on our conference in his lead article. As well as our excellent speakers, we had many workshops. We have some copies of workshop notes. These cover, Best Value Reviews, The Role of the Supervising Solicitor, Taking on Domestic Violence Work, Taking up Community Care, Tools for Promoting Your Law Centre and Developing Effective Legal Advice Services for Young People. Please contact Emma at emma@lawcentres.org.uk if you would like copies



Julian Lewis with Emmajane Taylor-Moran from Brent Community Law Centre at the LawWorks Clinic stand at the LCF Conference

We had a number of exhibitors this year including our LawWorks Project where Julian Lewis from the LCF held a surgery for delegates wishing to know more about setting up clinics. We also held a raffle and our thanks go to Sara Chandler who kindly sold tickets - a record £123.75 was raised. This has been donated to **Reprieve** - a charity that fights for the lives of people facing the death penalty and other human rights violations.

Our thanks are given to all our speakers, workshop leaders and delegates who worked so hard to make it a success. A special thanks is given to our supporters, AON Insurance, DNA Bioscience, Independent Lawyer, Legal Action Group, LexisNexis, Matrix Chambers and Mayers Brown Rowe and Maw.

LCF AGM

At our AGM on 11th November, delegates were sad to hear that Reita Clarke was stepping down as Chair of the LCF. The Minister paid tribute to Reita saying, *'Reita has been very active during her time as Chair in ensuring that Law Centres continue to meet the needs of the people and communities that they serve. Reita has worked hard to secure funding from an array of sources*

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and built strong links with national advice and representation bodies as well as with local and central government. Reita's work has helped form the basis for the future of Law Centres and their role in providing publicly funded advice services to the most vulnerable and disadvantaged in society. I'm sure everyone will join me in thanking Reita for her hard work over the last three years as Chair and in wishing her all the very best for the future.' We shall miss her.



Reita Clarke MBE with gifts from the LCF for her dedication to the LCF and Law Centres over many years

New Committee

A new LCF Executive Committee was elected at the AGM. There are still two vacancies to fill a staff place and a management committee place. Members of the new Committee are :

Officers

Chair	Gillie Sharp, Staff, Luton Law Centre
Vice Chairs	Alan Blacker, Management Committee, Rochdale Law Centre
	Bambos Charalambous, Management Committee, Enfield Law Centre <i>(to be endorsed)</i>
Secretary	Paul Mathurin, Management Committee, Gloucester Law Centre
Treasurer	Nick Woolf, Management Committee, Saltley & Nechells Law Centre

Management Committee places

Michael Ashe	Southwark Law Centre
David Bradbury	Oldham Law Centre
John Oke	Camden Law Centre
Cameron Philpot	Chesterfield Law Centre

Staff places

Andrew Jones	Isle of Wight Law Centre
Georgina Morgan	Tower Hamlets Law Centre
Maureen Vincent	Brent Community Law Centre
Teresa Waldron	Chesterfield Law Centre

The Executive also said goodbye to John Fitzpatrick, Ann Holdsworth, Victoria McNally and Richard Palmer who were all thanked for their invaluable contribute to the movement.

Motions Passed at the AGM

A resolution was submitted by Brent Community Law Centre on the Legal Services Commission's proposals set out in 'Making Legal Rights a Reality'. There was a good debate and the following motion was passed :



Jamie Ritchie, Brent Community Law Centre at LCF AGM

This AGM:

1. Notes the threat to democracy posed by centrally controlled legal services in a time of increasing threats to civil liberties generally.
2. Reaffirms that Community Law Centres with local representative management structures remain and have always been the most successful way of improving services, of establishing new and effective methods of working, of tackling poverty and exclusion and of defending and advancing the collective interest of their users.

3. Calls for the LCF to continue to promote the establishment of a properly funded, independent Community Law Centre in every area of the country is a prerequisite of any "Community Legal Service" worthy of the name.
4. Asks the incoming EC to organise its members to take such collective action as is necessary and effective to persuade the LSC to change from its present course in favour of the LCF's vision.

Because of recent opportunities to apply for national funding for Law Centres, the following Emergency Motion was tabled and passed. It read:

This AGM:

1. Recognises the value to Law Centres of LCF bidding for major funding that will enable Law Centres to expand their services.
2. Recognises that there are potential problems if LCF as a membership organisation enters into contracts with member Law Centres for delivery of services.
3. Calls on the EC to explore, identify and consult about mechanisms which will enable LCF to act as a lead body with funders that are compatible with its role as a membership organisation. These to include :
 - a. Establishing governance arrangements within LCF's current structure, designed to minimise any potential conflicts of interest.
 - b. Establishing an arms length contracting organisation, embodying good funding practice, but operating independently of LCF.
 - c. Using the services of a trusted third party organisation to undertake contract monitoring and management.

Young People

The Social Exclusion Unit launched its final report from its Young Adults project on 25th November. **Transitions: Young Adults with Complex Needs** aims *'to improve the delivery of public services to young people with complex needs by both introducing policy changes to existing services and raising the issue for other service providers to consider how best they are meeting the needs of this age range - 16-25 year olds - at such a critical stage of their life.'*

The report contains a strong focus on the need for holistic multi-disciplinary services targeting this age group, identifying 'under one roof' provision as a key delivery model for disadvantaged young people. **Streetwise Community Law Centre** is included in the section on examples of 'good practice and pointers for the future' and is given as an example of working in a holistic way. The Law Centre is highlighted as being *"particularly innovative"* in providing legal advice, casework and personal support for young people.

The report concludes that policy makers should place greater importance on 'one-stop' services which can deal with a range of common problems on site and says that Local Area Agreements should make it easier for local authorities to pool budgets to support more joined-up services for young people.

Points raised include :

- . Young adults suffer disproportionately from many types of disadvantage, including homelessness, worklessness, poor health (particularly mental and sexual health) and are at high risk of becoming involved in anti-social behaviour, drug use and crime.
- . Young adults report a range of barriers to seeking or getting help with their problems. Barriers exist in particular for young people with a range of problems that need a range of interventions from services that may not work well together.

- There is evidence that disadvantages for young adults tend to cluster and that one disadvantage makes people more likely to suffer from others.
- Housing and homelessness problems are identified as by far the most common reasons that the most disadvantaged young adults first get in touch with services. The ODPM will be issuing a revised '*Homelessness Code of Guidance for Local Authorities*' to prevent homelessness amongst young people and to highlight the importance of collaborative working between housing and other services.
- "If they are to continue to manage their way round a benefits system that is considerably more complex than the one that applies to older adults, young people need much better sources of benefits advice."

The report explores the value of the role of a 'trusted adult' or 'lead professional' who can provide continuity of support for a young person and combine a supportive/brokering role with some element of challenge for the young person. Voluntary and community organisations are identified as being particularly effective in providing the environment and skills to engage young adults initially.

It also emphasises the importance of involving young people in the design and development of any services that hope to meet their needs.

Transitions: Young Adults with Complex Needs can be downloaded from socialexclusionunit.gov.uk.

Our thanks to James Kenrick from Youth Access for highlighting key issues.

If you are interested in expanding services, you can obtain a copy of the workshop notes written by Roselle Potts from Streetwise Community Law Centre, 'Developing Effective Legal Advice Services for Young People' which she prepared for our conference in November. Please contact Emma at emma@lawcentres.org.uk if you would like a copy.

Rural News

A new **Commission for Rural Communities** (CRC) is to be set up under the Government's Natural Environment and Rural Communities Bill. The role of the CRC will be to advocate and offer advice. It will also have the role of watchdog, speaking on behalf of rural people. It has specifically been asked to look out for those suffering from disadvantage in a rural context and has already started a study into rural disadvantage.

Minister for Rural Affairs, Jim Knight said at a Rural Disadvantage and Social Justice conference in November, '*We know that even in the most affluent areas, one in six households are in income poverty (taken from the 2005 State of the Countryside report) and that 15% of rural children and 20% of rural pensioners are estimated to be living below the recognised poverty threshold.*'

The Minister also mentioned the new two year Rural Social and Community Programme which is due to start next April. The overall budget is £13.5 million per year, £8 million of which is to fund rural sub-regional delivery partnerships.

The programme aims to:

- enhance the community capacity building and entrepreneurial capability of rural communities so that those communities can work together to shape their own future;
- help socially excluded individuals in rural communities improve their life chances;
- develop the capacity of the voluntary and community sector, and of the town and parish council sector, to reinforce the delivery of the first two aims

A Briefing has been prepared by NCVO and you can visit the Department at: defra.gov.uk for further information.

The Commission for Rural Communities published 'Tackling rural disadvantage' this autumn.

The second stage of the study will cover looking at the priority groups they have highlighted: younger people, older people, and minority groups such as black and minority ethnic groups, migrant workers and gypsies and travellers, and people experiencing physical or mental health issues.

More information at:

<http://disadvantage.net.countryside.gov.uk/>

Guidance on Managing Unauthorised Camping

The Office of the Deputy Prime Minister has published guidance on the provision of Sites for Gypsies and Travellers. The guidance states that all local authorities should review the provision of sites and that Gypsies and Travellers should be involved in site planning and design to ensure that sites are well used and are safe and appropriate to the cultures and lifestyles of Gypsy and Travellers families, including children.

The Travellers Advice Team is based at the Community Law Partnership in Birmingham and provides an LSC funded advice line each week day. Their advice line is 0845 120 2980.

They can be emailed at:

office@communitylawpartnership.co.uk.

New Legislation

Childcare Bill

Published on 8th November the Bill aims to ensure that local authorities 'provide a better start' for all children up to the age of 5 years. Local authorities will have to provide sufficient childcare to meet the needs of working parents with particular regard to those with disabled children or on low incomes. Families though will only be able to access the childcare if they are eligible for working tax credit which may not encompass many families on low income. Local authorities will also have to provide access to information parents require for children up to the age of 20. The Bill introduces a 'new reformed legal framework for regulation and inspection for all early years setting by 2008.'

One of the criticisms made of the Bill is that it does not impose a compulsory requirement on the 150 top-tier local authorities to provide childcare for working parents and those making the transition into work. Instead, it allows councils to take into account their 'resources and capabilities' in deciding when to intervene.

Criminal Defence Service Bill

The Bill is expected to receive Royal Assent by the end of the year. The Bill proposes the reintroduction of a test of financial eligibility. The power to grant representation is also to be passed from the courts to the Legal Services Commission. The Bill is designed to ensure 'that those who can pay for their own criminal defence do pay.' The Government hopes to provide savings in the region of £35m per year.

Compensation Bill

The Bill was published on 3rd November. A very useful leaflet on claiming compensation has been published by Advicenow which is run by Advice Services Alliance. It can be downloaded free from advicenow.org.uk/compensation.

NHS Redress Bill

This Bill was issued on 13th October and places a duty on providers and commissioners of hospital services to ensure patients receive a more consistent, speedy and appropriate response to clinical negligence. It will cover low monetary value claims, with the upper limit expected to be set at £20,000.

Employment Tribunals (Representation and Assistance in Discrimination Proceedings) Bill

Employment Tribunals (Representation and Assistance in Discrimination Proceedings) Bill had its Second Reading on 15th October. It has now been dropped. The Bill recommended setting up a new Tribunal and Representation Board to cover discrimination cases with funds taken from the Equal Opportunity Commission, the Disability Rights Commission and the Commission for Racial Equality budgets. It was moved by **Marsha Singh MP** from Bradford West. Mr Singh referred to the '*sterling work*'

carried out by Law Centres. **Diana Johnson MP** for Kingston upon Hull (*ex-Law Centre worker*) spoke about our role in providing representation. She suggested that a way forward was to charge the Legal Services Commission with looking again at how best legal advice and representation can be provided where it is needed in tribunals.

Reference in the debate was made to the Scottish **Advice and Assistance by way of Representation Regulations 2003**. LCF has supported this model which gives the power to award legal aid for proceedings before an Employment Tribunal in cases where the Legal Aid Board is satisfied that the case is arguable; that it is reasonable in the particular circumstances and that the case is too complex to allow the applicant to present it to a minimum standard of effectiveness in person. The Board can also take into account the fact that the applicant may be unable to understand the proceedings or to state his own case because of age, inadequate knowledge of English, mental illness or other mental or physical disability.

Equality News

Equality Bill

During its Third Reading in the House of Lords, the Equality Bill was amended to enable regulations to be made to prohibit discrimination on the grounds of sexual orientation in the provision of goods, facilities and services. Alan Johnson, Secretary of State for the Department for Trade and Industry said that lesbian, gay and bisexual people still face unacceptable discrimination in their everyday lives, 'for example, by being turned away from hotels, or getting a raw deal from medical or other service providers.'

The decision follows months of lobbying from Stonewall through a 'Give us the Goods' campaign. The move had received support from both the Liberal Democrat and Conservative front benches at Report Stage on 19 October in the House of Lords. The amendment was accepted on 9th November. The Second Reading of the Bill in the House of Commons is taking place on 21st November.

It is hoped that the Equality Bill will be passed by April 2006 and that the Equality Review will report next summer. The new Commission for Equality and Human Rights is likely to be opened in October 2007 followed by the Single Equality Act, with the Commission taking on responsibility for all equality legislation in April 2009/10.

It is expected that the Commission will be based in two sites in England, with a majority of staff based in Manchester 'with a significant presence in London.' It will also have offices in Glasgow and Cardiff and a 'strong regional presence throughout Great Britain.'

Gender Equality

The Equal Opportunities Commission have published a briefing on the new duty on public bodies to promote equality between women and men. EOC have identified three areas of concern :

- . the omission of educational institutions will not be covered by the specific duties that will apply to the rest of the public sector. They will only apply in Scotland;
- . the pay specific duty needs to be amended to require action from public bodies across all three causes of the pay gap - discrimination, occupational segregation and the unequal impact of caring responsibilities;
- . additional work is needed on the design of the specific duties and on accompanying policy measures.

The Women's Resource Centre has also prepared a briefing - a copy of which can be obtained by calling their Policy Team on 020 7324 3030. Their recommendations include :

- . an analysis of discrimination and power should be undertaken and why the gender duty is needed;
- . violence against women should be acknowledged and addressed in a systematic way by public bodies;

- the specific duties should include a definition of stakeholders and that the women's voluntary and community sector needs to be explicitly named;
- public bodies should have to do a Gender Impact Assessment on every major current or existing policy or service delivery and there should be a duty of the Secretaries of State to report on progress on the gender duty.

The duty is due to come into force in April 2007. The Government's consultation paper can be found at:

womenandequalityunit.gov.uk/legislation.

The deadline is **12th January 2006**.

Disability

Office for Disability Issues

The Department for Work and Pensions announced on 1st December that the ODI will, *'ensure disabled people are a priority right across government throughout their lives. Where services have been disjointed and presented barriers to disabled people, this Office will ensure Government Departments work together and in partnership with disabled people to change this.'* The ODI is developing and supporting a new National Forum for Organisations of Disabled People which will feed in the views of disabled people into the policy-making process.

The ODI was launched at the same time as a new campaign to encourage small businesses to make themselves more accessible to customers and staff.

Definition of Disability

The government has launched a disability debate about the definition of disability and how it can be brought into line with the other anti-discrimination laws. Criticisms of the present definition is that it focuses on an individual's medical condition, rather than enquiring into the allegation of discrimination. The current definition is said to be difficult to understand and creates uncertainty. The Disability Rights Commission have been asked to consult on

whether, and if so how, the law could be amended to provide:

- Protection against discrimination on the grounds of impairment, regardless of level or type of impairment, and
- Entitlements to the removal of disabling barriers, and to submit its findings to the government.

Any changes would be introduced as part of a Single Equality Act in around 2010. A Questionnaire is available which can be downloaded from disabilitydebate.org. The closing date for comments is **28th February**.

Meanwhile....

Extension of the DDA

As will be known from **5th December 2005**, cover under the DDA 1995 will be extended to include people with HIV infection, cancer or multiple sclerosis.

There had been a previous indication that certain types of cancer were to be excluded from being deemed to be a disability. However, the Parliamentary Under Secretary of State announced in the Commons a few weeks ago that *"...following a review of evidence of the extent of discrimination faced by people with more minor forms of cancer, we have decided not to exercise the 2005 Act's regulation-making power which would allow us to exclude certain types of cancer from automatic coverage by the DDA 1995."*

Other changes from 5th December will include the removal of the requirement that a mental illness be "clinically well-recognised" before it can be regarded as an impairment.

Promoting Equality

The duty to promote equality comes into force on **6th December** and will mean that :

- Public bodies will have a new positive duty to promote equality of opportunity for disabled people (which may effect voluntary organisations funded by public bodies).

- The DDA will be extended to cover nearly all activities in the public sector, for example issuing licences, rather than just the provision of services.
- Those who manage or let premises will have to make reasonable adjustments to their policies and practices for disabled tenants or prospective tenants.
- The exemption for transport will be ended.

The DDA 2005 is at opsi.gov.uk/acts/acts2005/20050013.

The regulations that come into effect in December 2005 and December 2006 are at opsi.gov.uk/si/si2005/20052901.

Disability Rights Working Party

Next Meeting
17th January 2006
 12 noon to 3.00 p.m.

Chesterfield Law Centre
 44 Park Road, Chesterfield S40 1XZ

Tel: 01246 550674
 Fax: 01246 551069
 Minicom: 01246 204570
 email: clc@chesterfieldlawcentre.org.uk

Employment News

New Statutory Code of Practice on Racial Equality

The new Code was published on 24th November and comes into force on **6th April 2006** and will replace the CRE's original Code of Practice published in 1984. The Code sets out a series of recommendations and guidance on how to avoid unlawful racial discrimination and harassment in employment. It outlines employers' legal obligations under the Race Relations Act 1976 and contains general advice on the policies they will need to safeguard against discrimination and harassment, as well

as more detailed recommendations on the procedure and practice that will help ensure fair and equal treatment for everyone.

From 6th April 2006, employment tribunals will take its recommendations into account as evidence in any legal proceedings brought on or after that date under the Race Relations Act.

Work and Families Bill

The Bill was introduced in the House of Commons on 18th October 2005. The main provisions are :

- extending Statutory Maternity Pay and Maternity Allowance to 9 months from April 2007 with the ambition of moving to a year by the end of the Parliament;
- a power to introduce new paternity leave for fathers, enabling them to benefit from leave and statutory pay if the mother returns to work after six months but before the end of her maternity leave period;
- extending the right to request flexible working arrangements;
- measures to help businesses manage the administration of Statutory Maternity Pay, Statutory Paternity Pay and Statutory Adoption Pay;
- introducing 'keeping in touch' days so that where employees and employers agree, a women on maternity leave can go into work for a few days, without losing her right to maternity leave or a week's statutory pay;
- extending the period of notice for return from maternity leave to two months enabling employees and employers to more effectively plan for return to work;
- making clear in the regulations that employers can make reasonable contact with their employees on maternity leave to help employers plan and ease the mother's return to work;
- provide a new power to make provision about annual leave.

Critics have urged the Government to abandon the Bill's provisions for unused paid maternity leave to become available to the father as paid paternity leave. They suggest that the individual rights of working fathers be enhanced so that they can take time off to be with and care for their children at a time of their choosing. The TUC has suggested that parents be allowed to take unpaid leave by the day, instead of blocks of a week and letting parents take this unpaid leave when their children are older.

Citizens Advice has published "Hard Labour: Making maternity and paternity rights at work a reality for all" which has been endorsed by Fathers Direct, Working Families and Maternity Alliance and written by Richard Dunstan. Visit citizensadvice.org.uk for further information.

Sex Discrimination and Sexual Harassment

Under European provisions which were implemented in the UK on 1st October 2005, there is for the first time a statutory definition of sexual harassment and sex-based harassment. There are also a revised genuine occupational requirement provision, an updated definition of indirect discrimination, and explicit rights in relation to discrimination on the basis of pregnancy and maternity leave.

Indirect Discrimination

The definition has been brought into line with that found in the other strands of equality legislation.

A person now discriminates against a woman if "he applies a provision, criterion or practice which he applies or which would apply equally to a man but (i) which puts or would put women at a particular disadvantage when compared to men (ii) which puts her at that disadvantage and (iii) which he cannot show to be a proportionate means of achieving a legitimate aim."

The justification defence is now expressed as a "proportionate means of achieving a legitimate aim."

Pregnancy Discrimination

The SDA now spells out that treating a woman less favourably on the ground of pregnancy or maternity constitutes sex discrimination. This had already been established by case law.

Harassment

Previously there was no free standing offence of harassment and Claimants had to establish direct sex discrimination. The SDA is now amended to expressly prohibit sex-based harassment and harassment "of a sexual nature." In order to constitute unwanted conduct on the ground of sex or of a sexual nature the conduct must have the purpose or effect either violating a person's dignity or creating an intimidating, hostile, degrading, humiliating or offensive environment for that person.

The conduct complained of will only have this effect where *"having regard to all the circumstances, including in particular the perception of the complainant, it should reasonably be considered as having that effect."* Therefore an objective test is combined with the claimant's subjective perception. However the "reasonableness" test does not apply where the claim is that the purpose i.e. the motive or intention of the conduct was to violate dignity or damage the workplace environment. In such cases the Tribunal will have to decide, as a matter of fact, whether the conduct had such a purpose.

In order to establish gender-specific abuse it will not be necessary to prove that a person of the opposite sex would have been treated differently.

Jurisdiction

The SDA has now been harmonised with the other strands of equality legislation. As previously it is unlawful to discriminate against employees at an establishment in Great Britain and the new regulations provide that employment is to be regarded as being at an establishment in Great Britain if:-

- The employee does his or her work "wholly or partly in Great Britain" or

- The employee does his or her work wholly outside Great Britain and the following conditions apply:-
 - the employer has a place of business at an establishment in Great Britain
 - the work is for the purposes of the business carried out that establishment
 - the employee is ordinarily resident in Great Britain
- (i) at the time when he or she applies for or is offered employment or
- (ii) at any time during the course of employment

Questionnaires

Again to harmonise with other equality legislation, a "reasonable period" for a response has been amended to eight weeks.

The SDA and Equal Pay Act now apply to office holders whether paid or unpaid and ministers of religion as office holders.

Organised religions will be able to discriminate in relation to employment because of sex, gender reassignment or marital/civil partner status for the following reasons:-

- To comply with the doctrines of the religion;
- Because the nature of the employment and the context in which it is carried out, so as to avoid conflicting with the strongly held religious convictions of a significant number of the religion's followers.

We are grateful for the above analysis from the Charity Team at Russell-Cooke Solicitors.

They provide a useful employment law update which you can receive by sending a blank email to: employmentupdate-subscribe@smartgroups.com. Website: russell.cooke.co.uk.

The Employment Equality (Sex Discrimination) Regulations 2005 are at

opsi.gov.uk/si/si2005/20052467

Equal Pay

The Equal Opportunities Commission has established that where companies are paying men and women differently for equal work they must always provide a robust defence for their actions. Previously, employers only had to provide objective justification in cases where the difference in pay affected more women than men. The case, Sharp v Caledonia was heard an Employment Appeal Tribunal and will now be reheard by an Employment Tribunal.

The average hourly earnings for women working are 17.2% lower than for men working full-time, and for women working part-time earnings are 38.5 lower.

National Minimum Wage

On 1st October, the national minimum wage rose to £5.05 per hour. The youth rate paid to 18 to 21 year olds rose to £4.25. The rate for 16 and 17 year olds remains at £3.00. The Low Pay Commission is to review the lowest rate in their annual report to government in February 2006.

Civil Partners

Under the Civil Partnership Act 2004, the Sex Discrimination Act provisions make it unlawful to discriminate in employment against married people. This will be extended, from 5 December 2005, to apply to civil partners as well.

ACAS

ACAS has published a guide on Religion or Belief and the Workplace and has updated its guidance on Sexual Orientation and the Workplace.

They also have a new leaflet on Flexible Working. Visit: acas.org.uk to download copies.

A new DVD has also been launched by ACAS to guide employers and individuals through the employment tribunal process.

Housing News

The Law Commission is working on major changes to legislation covering renting homes and the resolution of housing disputes. On **Renting Homes**, the Commission say that before the end of the year they will be issuing their final recommendations to the ODPM on a new legal regime 'built on a consumer approach to the law'. Under the scheme, everyone renting their home would have access to a definitive written agreement setting out rights and obligations. Most of the current types of tenancies will be abolished.

The Commission plan to issue a consultation paper on 'how to make the law and practice on housing disputes simple, effective and fair' before the end of the year.

Once these important new papers are published, a meeting of the Housing Working Party will be called - this is likely to be in the new year.

Tenancy Deposits

The Office of the Deputy Prime Minister published a consultation paper on Tenancy Deposit Protection Statutory Instruments at the end of November. They expect to introduce the provisions on 2nd October 2006. The consultation ends on **1st February** and responses can be sent via email to: tenancy.deposits@odpm.gsi.gov.uk.

Housing Health and Safety Rating System

The Housing Health and Safety Rating System (HHSRS) is due to start on 6th April 2006. This requires housing associations and councils to assess hazards and risks in their housing stock. Other parts of the Housing Act 2004 coming into force at the same time are the Housing in Multiple Occupation and Selective Licensing Provisions (except Enforcement Provisions), Final Empty Dwelling Management Orders, Residential Property Tribunals and new Lands Tribunals Rules.

The Residential Property Tribunal will have a range of new jurisdictions which will enable them to determine appeals over local authority decisions on the licensing of housing in multiple occupation, the enforcement of HHSRS and the selective licensing of landlords.

Appeals against a local authority decision to reject an application to exercise the Right to Buy will also be heard by the Tribunal.

Good Practice Guide

The Joseph Rowntree Foundation has published a new guide '*Housing and Support Services for Asylum Seekers and Refugees*.' It is aimed at housing professionals working in local authorities and to those responsible for devising and delivering and support services. It includes a chapter on how to draw up a refugee housing strategy and guidance on the legal position for housing providers interviewing new migrants.

Anti-Social Behaviour Orders

The Office of the Deputy Prime Minister has issued a consultation on '*Enabling local authorities to contract their Anti-Social Behaviour Order functions to organisations managing their housing stock*'. Responses are requested by **1st February 2006**.

They can be submitted by email to: asbconsult@odpm.gsi.gov.uk.

Asbomania

Shami Chakrabarti, the Director of Liberty is speaking about '*Asbomania - the descent from natural and social justice into mob rule*' on **10th January** at 1.00 (to 2.00) at the Courtauld Institute of Art in London. The lunchtime lecture has been organised by the British Institute of Human Rights. Information on 020 7848 1924.

Also see Shorts for news on ASBOs...



Emma Reimer and Jen Corlew with the Minister, David Miliband at the LCF stand at the Labour Party Conference in the autumn

Maria Eagle, Minister for Young People speaking with Alison Hannah from Legal Action and Emma Day from Enfield Law Centre at the LCF fringe meeting on Young People's civil rights at the Labour Party Conference.



Immigration News

Law Centres and Regulation of Immigration Advice

LCF Director, Steve Hynes provides an update below on the current situation :

Law Society Position

The LCF Executive Committee (EC) discussed the regulation of immigration advice in Law Centres at their recent meeting and a letter has been circulated to Law Centres.

Discussions on the regulation of Law Centres and immigration advice have been ongoing for the last 18 months. A number of meetings have now been held between the Law Society and LCF. At the latest meeting in September it seemed likely that a compromise could be brokered so that the Law Society could continue to regulate those Law Centres which had not opted voluntarily to be regulated by the Office of the Immigration Services Commission (OISC). A letter from Russell Wallman, Senior Director of Regulation at the Law Society, (dated 11th November (this has been circulated with a covering letter from LCF)), indicates that this will not be possible and that our immigration work will need to be regulated by OISC until or if the Law Society are given "more satisfactory powers" under legislation. This is unlikely to happen before 2008 when it is anticipated new legislation on the regulation of the legal professions is enacted.

Meeting with the Immigration Services Commissioner

The issue of regulation of Law Centres was discussed at the General Meeting on 5th September at which an emergency motion was passed. The General meeting asked the EC to set-up a meeting with the Chief Executive of the Law Society and the Commissioner.

A meeting was eventually arranged with the Commission for 25th November and it was originally envisaged that the Law Society would attend. However, the letter dated 11th November made their position clear i.e. they believe that Law Centres are the responsibility of the OISC for the regulation of immigration advice.

The meeting was attended by Gillie Sharp, LCF Chair, Azhar Chohan, Immigration Advisor at Paddington Law Centre and Steve Hynes, LCF Director. LCF advised the Commissioner that no decision had been taken by LCF yet on whether to challenge the Law Society's interpretation of the rules, but notwithstanding this, it would make sense to discuss interim arrangements for the regulation of Law Centres.

The Commissioner agreed the following :

1. Law Centres would have up until **31st March 2006** to register for an exemption.
2. No action would be taken by the OISC until the deadline to enforce registration.
3. An advice note would be drafted from the Commissioner offering guidance on registering in the transition period and giving assurances over minimising bureaucracy.
4. An application form for exemptions reducing unnecessary questions would be produced for Law Centres.

Further Action

LCF is advising all Law Centres to fill in the exemption form from OISC before 31st March 2006. These will be sent to all Law Centres early in the New Year. LCF is also exploring the possibility of persuading the Law Society to continue to regulate Law Centres by asking Law Centre management committees if they are prepared to be bound by the Solicitors Act with regard to the employment of non-solicitor staff undertaking immigration advice.

Section 55

On 3rd November the House of Lords unanimously upheld the appeal court ruling that Section 55 of the Nationality, Immigration Act breached human rights. In his ruling Lord Bingham of Cornhill said. *'Article Three of the European Convention prohibits member states from subjecting persons within their jurisdiction to torture or inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment. Since these appeals do not concern torture or punishment, the focus is on inhuman and degrading treatment. Does the regime imposed on late applicants amount to treatment within the meaning of Article Three ? I think it plain that it does.'*

Law Centre lawyers were amongst those who took up the cases on behalf of their clients. The Government conceded that changes would be made. Immigration Minister, Tony McNulty said that they would consider changing the rules, but said, *'The judgement leaves intact a fundamental principle within our approach to asylum which is that people should claim as soon as they arrive in the country...We are adopting tough new means to crack down on opportunistic behaviour. In particular, we are setting up tightly managed new processes for handling late and opportunistic claims.'*

Section 9

Barnardo's, together with the Refugee Children's Consortium have published their findings from research they carried out earlier this year. "The End of the Road" called the system 'inhumane' and ineffective. They concluded that :

"It is clear that the legal and practice problems posed by combining section 9 with child welfare and human rights standards have not been worked out through the pilot process. Rather than becoming increasingly confident as time has progressed, local authorities are becoming more acutely aware of the impossibility of their own position.

"Finally, there is little evidence that this inhumane, administratively confused policy is effective, even in the limited sense of creating a significant rise in the numbers of families returning to their country of origin. Not one family has returned, but at least 35 have disappeared, and are now living on the margins of our society, vulnerable to abuse and exploitation.

Barnardo's make a number of recommendations including a government review of its asylum policy as a whole, specifically considering the extent to which it is compatible with the Children Act 1989, Human Rights Act 1998 and the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child.

A meeting on Section 9 has been organised in Manchester on **28th January**. It takes place at 11.00 at the Methodist Central Hall in Oldham Street.

Immigration, Asylum and Nationality Bill

There are many worrying proposals in the new Bill and changes are being made as it goes through parliament. Clause 1 prevents in-county appeals in variations cases. The only exceptions will be for those with existing leave as refugees, and those who raise asylum or human rights claims that are not certified. This will mean that workers, students, working holidaymakers and spouses etc will lose their in-county right of appeal. Anyone whose application to vary leave is refused will become an over-stayer. Clause 4 limits the rights of appeal in entry clearance cases to family visitors and dependents. There will be no right of appeal in all other entry clearance categories.

The government's proposals on terrorism have also had an impact. Clause 51 gives a statutory definition to the meaning of Article 1F of the Refugee Convention. There is concern that this clause could extend the grounds for denying international protection to refugees. Clause 52 extends the grounds on which the government can deprive people of British citizenship and Clause 53 provides a power to deny a right of abode to people whose presence the Secretary of State feels is not conducive to the public good. Clause 54 will require any person seeking registration as a citizen to be of 'good character'

Tony McNulty introduced a new clause into the Immigration, Asylum and Nationality Bill at the Third Reading on 16th November which allows detainees to take paid work. The said work is to be 'remedial and assistive'. (New Clause 2: A detained person does not qualify for the national minimum wage in respect of work which he does in pursuance of removal centre rules)

The new compulsory test for citizenship started on 1st November. Unfortunately, a number of the test centres were not ready and there have been problems with accessibility for disabled applicants.

NASS

At the South West London Law Centre AGM, Bridget Prentice, the Minister for Legal Aid, said that the *'LSC had been discussing the form and process of means assessment that is undertaken as part of the NASS application process with NASS officials. They are currently*

considering entering into a Service Level Agreement with NASS which would ensure that the Commission could access information regarding an individual's NASS entitlement when seeking confirmation that the client was eligible for public funding. The Commission has also begun a pre-consultation process with its stakeholder to address the issue of including NASS as a passported 'benefit'.

ASAP AGM

The Asylum Support Appeals Project celebrated their first AGM on 28th November. The project aims to ensure that asylum seekers are represented at Asylum Support Appeal tribunals and offers advice and support to other organisations assisting asylum seekers on asylum support appeals. They run the Tribunal Duty Scheme and a telephone helpline for agencies. This number is 020 8684 5972. The Project also offers training and can undertake casework for a limited number of referrals.



A packed audience at ASAP's AGM on 28th November

Speaking at their AGM, Steven Knaffler QC was critical of recent legislation saying, *'Whilst the Home Office has access to well-paid civil servants and lawyers, who produce expert and detailed letters and, where appropriate, legal and factual submissions, the government has made no provision for asylum seekers to receive assistance in effectively presenting their cases. Worse than that, the LSC has refused to grant funding in such cases. That is why the ASAP is so very important.'*

ASAP is based at Cornerstone House in Croydon. They are funded by the Helen Tetlow Memorial fund, Two Garden Court Chambers, City Parochial Foundation, the Big Lottery and the London Legal Support Trust.

Welfare Benefits News

Civil Partnership Act for people claiming Working Tax Credit and/or Child Tax Credit

When the Civil Partnership Act came into force on 5th December 2005 same sex couples, who are living together as partners, will be treated in exactly the same way as opposite sex couples, whether or not they have formed a civil partnership.

This means that if people are making a new claim for tax credits on or after 5th December 2005 and are living with a civil partner, or with a same sex partner as if in a civil partnership, they must make a joint claim as a couple.

If people are already claiming tax credits as an individual but are living with a same sex partner as if in a civil partnership, they must tell Inland Revenue that they are living as a couple on 5th December 2005 or within 3 months of that date. Claimants will be asked to complete a new joint claim form. If people form a civil partnership in the future or start to live with a same sex partner as if they are civil partners, they must tell the Revenue when they begin to live as a couple.

Circumstances can be reported by:

- Ringing the Tax Credit Helpline on 0845 300 3900 (Great Britain) or 0845 603 2000 (Northern Ireland)
- Visiting one of their Enquiry Centres (listed in the telephone directory as Inland Revenue Enquiry Centre)
- Writing to HM Revenue & Customs, Tax Credit Office, Preston PR1 0SB.

If, in addition to tax credits, claimants or their partner receive income-related social security benefits, they must tell the Department for Work and Pensions or Local Inland Revenue office.

Working Tax Credits

Since 7th November 2005 working tax credit for new claimants have been paid direct into bank accounts, rather than being paid by employers through the PAYE system. Existing claimants will be changed to the direct payment system by 6 April 2006, but will continue to be paid through the payroll until HM Revenue & Customs tells the employer to stop doing so.

By 7th November all employers should have written to (or emailed) all employees who are receiving working tax credit through their payroll, and HMRC is also writing to all affected employees. Information about the changes, including the letter for employers to send to employees, is at hmrc.gov.uk/employers/pve-mailshot

Helplines are at 08457 143 143 for employers and 0845 300 3900 for employees.

From 31st October, Job Centre Plus introduced the **Work Search Premium** for Working Tax Credit Partners. It is intended to help non-working partners in single earner families make the transition into full time work of 16 hours or more a week. It is payable for a maximum of 26 weeks at £20 a week and is paid under Section 2 of the Employment and Training Act 1973. It is being piloted in 8 Job Centre Plus districts including Birmingham, Bradford, Leicester, London City and East, London North East, London South and Luton.

CPAG has published an action plan to help improve the operation of tax credits. Its recommendations to Government include an amnesty on all overpayments that arose in 2003/04 and 2004/05 where fraud has not been proven, introducing a right of appeal and no automatic recovery of overpayments. In his Budget Statement on 5th December, the Chancellor said he *'would overhaul the rules on paying out child tax credits to make them more flexible and take more account of changes in people's income.'* The Chancellor announced that from April next year, the tax credit system will allow annual income changes, of up to £25,000 - *'covering 95% of all income rises during the year.'* and *'Where recovery does take place during the year, new rules will be adopted on repayment to address potential hardship.'*

The announcement has been welcomed.

Third Party Deductions Scheme

DWP has published an updated leaflet on third party deductions. If people are on Income Support, Jobseeker's Allowance or Pension Credit they can get held with accommodation costs, utility charges, council tax and court fines.

Reports

Two recent reports have criticised the welfare system.

The Committee of Public Accounts found in their report, **'Helping those in financial hardship: The running of the Social Fund'** that only 50% of potential users were aware of the Social Fund.

They found that some claimants may have received inappropriate advice from the Department; that the Department was unable to find a significant proportion of client files and that there were very large local variations in decision making practices and costs, which *'raise doubts about fairness and effectiveness across the country.'*

The National Audit Office also published in November **'Dealing with the complexity of the benefits system'** which analysed how the complexity of the system arose and the effect it has. This included it leading to administrative errors by both staff and claimants and that official decisions are vulnerable to challenge and appeals. Around 20,000 cases a month - around 1% of all decisions - go to appeal.

The report suggests that simplification of the regulations will not necessarily be the answer and that the Department should seek to manage its complexity, such as shortened forms and the development of contact centres and the greater use of 'telephony'.

Social Fund decisions

The Independent Review Services can review decisions made by Job Centre Plus about community care grants, crisis loans and budgeting loads. It has recently published its annual report which shows that over half of the decisions reviewed in the last year were changed.

The IRS say that they can deal with urgent matters within 24 hours, and 99.5% of reviews are completed within 12 days. The report is at: irs-review.org.uk/infocent/reports.

Shorts

ASBOs and Young People

A survey by the British Institute for Brain Injured Children has found that more than a third of children aged under 17 issued with anti-social behaviour orders have a diagnosed mental illness or learning difficulty. The study found that a majority of children with ASBOs have attention hyperactivity disorder, while others suffer from depression-related behavioural difficulties, conduct disorders and Tourette syndrome.

The latest figures from the government show that 5,557 Asbos were issued from April 1999 to March 2005. The numbers rose by 897 from January to March alone, and almost half were issued to young people.

The Social Exclusion Unit report that although young people have been given 1,197 Asbos since April 2004, in the same period only 16 Individual Support Orders and been issued. The report, 'Transitions' recommends cross-government action to, 'Reinforce responsibility, respect and raise aspirations by improving the support behind Asbos with increased use of individual support orders to tackle the underlying causes of anti-social behaviour.

Research on ASBOs

Helen Easton, Senior Researcher at London South Bank University is conducting a research project on anti-social behaviour orders and would like to speak to people who have been subject to these orders over the last 18 months. The research wants to identify the outcomes for people who have been issued ASBOs using confidential and anonymous interviews. Each participant will get the opportunity to explain their experiences individually to the researcher and will receive £10.00 for their contribution. The findings will contribute to making policy recommendations across the country.

Information about the project has been circulated via email to Law Centres. Helen would like to conclude the interviews by mid December. She can be contacted on 020 7815 5880.

More on ASBOs in Housing News on page 17.

Race Hate Crime

The Crown Prosecution Service has reported a 33% rise of hate race crime in 2004/05. They also report that religiously aggravated cases dropped to 34 from 49 in the previous year. The figures though were taken before 7th July bombings.

Research on Hate Crime

Victim Support has commissioned Michael Bell Associates to undertake research into the support needs of people affected by hate crime. The results will be used to help draw attention to the nature and scale of the problem, and to improve Victim Support's services to individuals and communities affected by hate crime.

Further details about the research can be found at: mba4consultancy.co.uk/default

As part of the research they are carrying out a survey of organisations that provide direct support and services to victims of hate crime. The researcher asks if Law Centres who provide direct support and services to hate crime victims would complete the survey as well as contacting any local organisation you know who provides support. The deadline for responses is **9th December 2005**.

The survey is online and should only take 10-15 minutes to complete. Visit: surveys-direct.org.uk/victimsupport for a copy.

New advice service from One Parent Families

Until April 2006, One Parent Families are funded to provide a specialist advice service for lone parents who are caring for a child who has a disability or a long-term health problem.

Their number is 0800 018 5026 9.00 - 5.00 each week day. They also have a free information guide. The Lone Parent Guide to Caring for a Child with Additional Needs. Call 0800 018 5026 for copies.

Information at: oneparentfamilies.org.uk.

Mediation Toolkit

The Civil Justice Council's ADR Committee has published a toolkit for court mediation schemes. It includes a checklist of when mediation works best and when it works less well. Part 2 deals with practicalities of setting up a scheme and the stages of the court process at which mediation can be considered. A number of sample documents are also included.

Visit: adr.civiljusticecouncil.gov.uk for more information.

The LSC has a leaflet on ADR called '**Alternatives to Court**' written by the Advice Services Alliance. The latest edition will be available by the end of the year.

Greater Manchester Low Pay Unit

Greater Manchester Low Pay Unit has moved to the 4th Floor, Swan Buildings, 20 Swan Street, Manchester M4 5JW and their new number is 0161 839 3888. In their recent newsletter they report on six month pilot project to provide 'Personnel and Employment Law Support' to local voluntary and community organisations. It is being run in partnership with Interchange Legal Advice Service.

Free Case Law Updates

Lawindexpro offers up to four updates by email a month. The cost of having the service every month is £17.00. Information at: lawindexpro.co.uk.

Lord Woolf

Lord Woolf, the retiring Lord Chief Justice has joined Blackstone Chambers as a non-resident mediator and arbitrator. He is also an advisor and consultant to the Centre for Effective Dispute Resolution.

Advertising a Job ?

Contact Ward Diamond who will be happy to quote you special rates as members of the LCF

Telephone number: 020 7025 3500

Funding News

The Big Lottery Fund

The BLF grants are planned to award a total £2.6 million grants over the next three years, of which 60% to 70% will go to voluntary organisations. Around one third of the grants will be through 'demand led' programmes. Grants are from £10,000 to £500,000 and for up to 5 years and will be paid on a 'full cost recovery' basis. **Application packs have been available since 5th December.**

The voluntary and community sector infrastructure programme has up to £50 million a year. There will be 3 rounds, one each year, with the first running from February to May 2006. Most of the grants will be for a maximum of £500,000. A new Community Buildings programme has been introduced with funding of £50 million over 2006/09. The Advice Services programme which we reported on in September also has £50 million over 3 years. One of the two stands is the development of local service projects.

The Directory of Social Change has an excellent commentary on the new programme.

The Baring Foundation

The Foundation has announced their 2006 programme for strengthening the voluntary sector. Next year they are merging their project and core costs grants into a single fund. These will range from £20,000 to £100,000 and will be for up to 5 years. They are for organisations in London, Merseyside, Devon and Cornwall. In London the priority will be given to bids covering more than one London borough. There are no deadlines. For more information, visit: baringfoundation.org.uk or call 020 7767 1348.

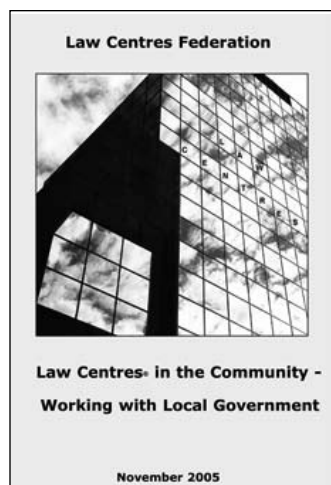
Neighbourhood Renewal Funding

NRF aims to enable England's 88 most deprived authorities, in collaboration with the Local Strategic Partnership to improve services, narrowing the gap between deprived areas and the rest of the county. While additional funding of £535 million was allocated for each of the years

Networking..

2006/07 and 2007/08, no decision has yet been reached on how the new NRF resources will be allocated. They have however, agreed the arrangements for carrying forward any unspent NRF funds. It was agreed by the Neighbourhood Renewal Unit and the Treasury that local authorities in agreement with the members of the LSP could carry over 15% of the NRF for year ending 2003/04, 10% for year ending 2004/05 and 5% for year ending 2005/06. For further information on NRF allocations, contact your local authorities neighbourhood renewal team. For information about the government's renewal programme, visit: neighbourhood.gov.uk.

The LCF has prepared a draft guide on regeneration, '**Law Centres in the Community - Working with Local Government**' which was distributed at the LCF conference. For a copy, please contact Lynn and the LCF at: lynn@lawcentres.org.uk.



Draft Publication on Local Government presented at the LCF Conference in November

Conferences

Discrimination Law in 2006 The TUC and Equal Opportunities Review have organised their national conference for **20th January**. It starts at 9.15 and last until 4.30 and takes place at Congress House in London. The keynote address will be made by Lord Lester of Herne Hill QC and speakers include Michael Rubenstein, Robin Allen QC and Tess Gill. Information has been sent directly to Law Centres. The cost to attend this conference is only £60.00, so book early to get a place. Forms can be obtained from Amanda Ling at the TUC on 020 7467 1260.

Discrimination Law Association 6th National Conference takes place on **12th December** in London. The theme is. '*Re Imagining Equality: A Vision for the Future*' and coincides with the government's review of discrimination law.

Visit: discrimination-law.org.uk for further details. Law Centres can become associate members for £45.00.

Housing Law Conference Conference organised by the Law Society and the Housing Law Practitioners' Association on **14th December** at the Royal College of Surgeons in London. Fee for HLPAs members is £165.00. Information on 01920 487672 or email: bookings@profbriefings.co.uk.

Judicial Review Conference organised by Thomson and Sweet and Maxwell on **16th December** in London. Keynote speaker: Gareth Peirce. £381.88 inc VAT. Call the conference administrator on 020 7393 7859 for details.

NCVO Conference takes place on **21st February**. Their keynote speakers are David Miliband, the Minister of Communities and Local Government and Shami Chakrabarti, the Director of Liberty. £154.00. Visit: ncvo-vol.org.uk.

Bassac Conference is on between the **3rd and 5th February** in Brighton. "*Achieving real and lasting change in 21st century neighbourhoods - sustainable development from the grassroots up*" has Jill Rutter from Defra who will officially launch the Government's Community Action 2006 programme. £385 for not-for-profit agencies. Information on 0845 241 0375 or email: info@bassac.org.uk

Advice Services Alliance Their second national conference, '*Advice uncovered: the real value of what we do*' is taking place on 24th March at Friends House in London.

The conference will examine the changing sector and look at how we can make the case for advice. More details in our next edition.

For updates, visit asauk.org.uk/conference.

Training

Education Law Advisory Centre for Education (ACE) has published their 2006 Training Programme. Training includes Exclusions & Exclusion Appeals on 24th February; Special Educational Needs (SEN) & Disability Discrimination on 10th March; Children out of School on 15th March; Admissions & Admission Appeals on 23rd and 29th March. The venue is London Voluntary Sector Resource Centre, 356 Holloway Road, London N7 6PA. All courses accredited by The Law Society and ILEX. They also provide tailored 'in-house' courses to meet individual needs. For information visit ace-ed.org.uk/training or email training@ace.dialnet.com. Phone 020 7704 3375.

JCWI Training The Joint Council for the Welfare of Immigrants has issued their winter programme going up to May 2006. For example, Advanced human rights law for immigration and asylum practitioners takes place on 30th January. Preparing and presenting asylum appeals in the AIT takes place on 17th January and the 31st May. A course on judicial reviewing immigration decisions takes place on 21st April. Courses are run in London and Manchester. The fee for LSC contract holders is £95.00 for one day. Contact number 020 7608 7306 or visit: jcw.org.uk.

Advocacy in a Mental Health Setting Course provided by Advocacy Resource Exchange and sponsored by the Mental Health Foundation. It takes place on 13th March in Leeds. The fee is £93.00 however the Mental Health Foundation has sponsored a number of free places. Visit: advacacyresource.net for further information about this and other courses or call 0208 880 4545.

Age Discrimination - Telephone Seminars Organised by Daniel Barnett and taking place on the 12th and 23rd of January. The Seminars are accredited for 2.75 CDP hours. Fee for both Seminars is £129.00 plus VAT. Visit: danielbarnett.co.uk/age_telseminar

Housing for Lesbians, Gay Men and Bisexual People, Performance Management in the Not-for-Profit Sector Two of many courses provided by Shelter. Their new training programme goes up to March 2006. Contact: Tara Doyle, Shelter's Training administrator on 020 7490 6720 or book on line at: shelter.org.uk/training.

Outcome Grants from the Big Lottery Fund

The Directory of Social Change is running courses throughout the new year in Birmingham, London and Manchester. New courses this season are The Secret of Teams, Managing Change, Managing Attendance and Coaching. DSC's new programme of training and events is now out. For more information visit: dsc.org.uk.

Parliamentary and Health Service Ombudsman Seminar being held on 12th December in the MIC Conference Centre in Euston Street, London. Keynote speaker is David Walker from the Guardian. The Day includes for four workshops including one on tax credits. The Ombudsman is Ann Abraham and their website address is: ombudsman.org.uk and lgo.org.uk. Telephone 020 7217 4258.

Monitoring and Evaluation Courses are provided by Charities Evaluation Services. They regularly put on two-day foundation courses. A one day course for someone from a Law Centre with less than 15 staff is £130.00. Further details on 020 7713 5692.

Solicitors' Accounts Rules for Accounts Staff Course provided by Central Law Training on 11th January in London. £190.00. Please quote LCF membership reference number FSS 2242. Course materials are available for £79.00.

Preparing Charity Accounts Training run by Sayer Vincent on 31st January and 22nd March. They cost £117.50. Information on 020 7841 6360 or email svinfo@sayervincent.co.uk.

BA in Advice Studies Course run by Staffordshire University with intakes each February and September. Students can study on-line. You can find out more by visiting: staffs.ac.uk/courses/gateway/advice_studies or call 01782 295720\78 or email k.l.hawley@staffs.ac.uk.

Looking for IT training ? Happy Computers have published their winter programme. Check their website happy.co.uk for details. Where there are spaces five days prior to the course, Happy offer at 50% discount - so worth looking. As well as London, Happy can provide training in Bristol, Birmingham and Manchester. Call 020 7375 7300 for details.

Books

Employment Law: An Adviser's Handbook
Written by Tamara Lewis from Central London Law Centre and published by Legal Action Group. This is the 6th edition of the book and costs £28.00. *A must for every Law Centre.* Visit lag.org.uk for further information.

Working with Young People: Legal Responsibility and Liability New edition of the guide has been published by the Children's Legal Centre. £24.95 plus £1.50 p&p. This 6th edition of the guide was written by Carolyn Hamilton and has been updated to take into account changes in the law relating to children as a result of the Adoption and Children Act 2002, the Children Act 2004 and new government guidance and circulars. To order, call 01206 872466 or visit: childrenslegalcentre.com.

Deportation Is Freedom! An Orwellian analysis of immigration controls This book is a searing critique of today's immigration systems. Former barrister Steve Cohen declares that these systems are deeply flawed, and takes a fresh look at the ethical and political problems that surround this controversial subject. £12.99 from Jessica Kingsley Publishers: jkp.com/catalogue/book.php/isbn/1-84310-294-3

Asylum Support: A Practitioners' Guide to the EU Reception Directive by Anneliese Baldaccini. The EU Reception Directive imposes minimum standards of support on all member states and is now part of UK law. Published by Justice on 3rd November and costs £17.00. Call 020 7329 5100 or visit: justice.org.uk.

Student Support and Benefits Handbook
A new CPAG guide published in November with the National Union of Students. £11.00 plus £3.99 p&p. Information at cpag.org.uk.

Lone Parent Handbook 2005/06 - The Comprehensive Advice Guide to Lone Parents' Rights 3rd edition from One Parent Families. Published in July for £29.50 inc. Telephone: 0845 450 0404 or visit: oneparentfamilies.org.uk.

Roof Wallcharts Updated versions of the wallcharts are now available from Shelter. They cover Housing Benefit and Council Tax. £11.75 plus VAT each or £20 for two. Visit: shelter.org.uk/publications.

Leaflets

Working with the Media - A Guide for Anti-Racist Campaigners and Refugee Rights Activities Guide published by the Institute of Race Relations in October. A useful leaflet that includes a chapter on seeking redress and guidance from MediaWise on reporting asylum and refugee issues. Copies can be downloaded from irr.org.uk

Civil Partnership and Older People It is expected that many older lesbian and gay couples will register a civil partnership after the legislation comes into force on 5th December. The Women and Equality Unit at the DTI has produced an 8 page booklet advising people about their rights and responsibilities. It can be obtained by calling 0845 015 0010 quoting URNO5/1485. Details can also be found at: womenandequalityunit.gov.uk/civil-partnership. Stonewall has also produced a guide to the Civil Partnership Act. Visit: stonewall.org.uk for information.

Time Off for Public Duties An update from the DTI Employment Relations Unit. Available at: dti.gov.uk/er (PL702 Rev 5 - URN 05/1672)

Managing ICT An expanded and revised guide from London Advice Services Alliance costing £5.00 and available from LASA. Visit: lasa.org.uk/computernews/guides.

Websites

The Equal Opportunity Commission has set up a site offering advice to young people "**Young People - Know Your Rights!**" The site focuses on sex discrimination but covers other areas as well. EOC have also published a guide "Young People need advice too" which covers sex discrimination and equal pay. Visit: eoc.org.uk for further information.

Ban Bullying at work ACAS has launched a free new e-learning course to help employers and prevent bullying in the workplace.

This joins 6 other free e-learning packages on their website: acas.org.uk.

The **Local Government Ombudsman** has a guide on their website for advisers. It includes a referral form to help submit a complaint on behalf of clients. They also offer a free A1 wall chart for advice agencies on making a referral. The Adviser's Consultancy Line is available to discuss specific cases. The number is on 0845 602 1983 and their website is at : lgo.org.uk.

Reports

"In the Balance - Disabled People's experiences of Debt" New publication from Leonard Cheshire. It looks at the causes and the impact of debt amongst disabled people and combines statistical analysis with a more detailed exploration of its effect on people's lives. The report makes a number of recommendations such as the placing of a statutory duty on all lenders to lend responsibly.
Visit: lc-uk.org/campaigns

Preventing Racist Violence Report published by the Runnymede Trust this October. Copies can be downloaded from their website: runnymedetrust.org.

Migration and Social Mobility: The life chances of Britain's minority ethnic communities A new study by the Joseph Rowntree Foundation. The research found that a privileged background continues to operate alongside education in increasing life chances. The researcher concluded that, 'the policy ideal of a 'meritocracy' in which class and ethnic background no longer play a role is not being fulfilled for the up-and-coming generations.'

Tackling the Roots of Racism has been published by The Policy Press with the support of the Joseph Rowntree Foundation. The research argues that anti-racist legislation including policies on equality in the workplace have failed to tackle the roots of racism. It argues that although there are many types of racism, there are two that stand out: '*Elite Racism*' and '*Situated Racism*'. It costs £15.99 plus £2.75 p&p. Contact number 01235 465500.

The EU Charter of Fundamental Rights and Freedoms: An Introduction A report written by Marilyn Goldberg at Justice. Information on 020 7329 5100 or visit: justice.org.uk.

The Protection of Children Act 1999: A Practical Guide to the Act for all organisations working with Children This was revised in September by the Department for Education and Skills and can be downloaded from: publications.teachernet.gov.uk.

Better Care : A resource pack for voluntary organisation and community groups - working with vulnerable adults. This has been published by Voluntary and Community Action South Bedfordshire. Email contact: mail@action-southbeds.orr.uk.

Independent Living: Real Choice, Real Control, Real Independence - the Equal Citizenship of Disabled People Paper published by the Disability Rights Commission this autumn. Independent Living in the paper is defined as : '*All disabled people having the same choice, control and freedom as any other citizen -at home and as members of the community.*'
Visit DRC's website at: drc.org.uk.

Everybody's Business: Integrated mental health services for older adults - A service development guide Published in November by Care Services Improvement Partnership. Visit: everybodysbusiness.org.uk to download a copy.

RNID Impact Report 2004/05 Published in November, the Report highlighted that 500,000 people now receive digital hearing aids free of charge from the NHS. They also run the Department of Health's online community equipment store and have established a video relay to aid communication between BSL users and hearing people.

Office of the Legal Services Complaints Commission "Pushing for Change" is an Interim Report on the Law Society's complaints handling performance from April to September 2005. The Commission voiced concern about the number of older cases it has outstanding and its poor performance in customer satisfaction, but said that there had been some improvements in performance. The Commission is based on the 19th Floor, West Riding House, 67 Albion Street, Leeds LS1 5AA. Their website is at: olsc.gov.uk.

The Management of Civil Cases: The Courts and the post Woolf Landscape Research published by the DCA in November.

Law Centre Vacancies

Chesterfield Law Centre

Volunteers Co-ordinator

This well established Law Centre provides free legal advice and representation to the rural and urban communities of North Derbyshire.

We are looking for someone to lead on our volunteers and training programme including the recruitment, training and support of all volunteers. Ideally, you will have two years relevant project management experience and (or, if applying on a flexible working basis) substantial knowledge and experience of working with and delivering accredited training to volunteers.

Funded by the Coalfields Regeneration Trust this offers a Full time, permanent contract (funding guaranteed until March 2008). It is open to job share applicants/applications for flexible working.

Starting Salary : £23,265 p.a.
(with 4% pension contribution)

Chesterfield Law Centre is striving to be an equal opportunities employer and welcomes applications from all sections of the community.

For an application pack (no CVs) , write to:
44 Park Road, Chesterfield S40 1XZ
Telephone: 01246 550674(voice) 01246 204570 (text phone)email: clc@chesterfieldlawcentre.org.uk

Closing date: Wednesday, **4th January 2006**

Barnet Law Service

Caseworker or Trainee Caseworker

Part - time: 21 hours a week.

Barnet Law Service is a small, friendly, and forward-looking second-tier advice service, based in Hendon in north London, providing advice and representation in various areas of social law. A vacancy has arisen for a part-time caseworker to advise and represent clients on Welfare Benefits cases, working 21 hours per week. Ideally you will have some knowledge of and experience in this area of law but we will consider training a suitable applicant.

Must be IT literate. Knowledge of or experience in housing, community care or other areas of social law an advantage.

This post is funded by the ALG until 2007.

Salary range : £18,000 - £29,000 p.a. pro-rata

For more information:

Please phone or email for an application pack:
bls@barnetlaw.co.uk / 020 8203 4141

Barnet Law Service, 9 Bell Lane, Hendon, London NW4 2BP

Application deadline: Friday **30th December 2005**

Interviews planned for 18th January 2006

LCF Staff

Noeleen Adams, London Unit Manager, **Victor Adetiba**, Finance Worker (P/T), **Lynn Evans**, Policy Manager, **Steve Hynes**, Director, **Metin Kemal**, Regional Development Manager, **Julian Lewis**, LawWorks Project Manager, **Minaxi Panchal**, London Training and Organisational Development, **Stella Russell**, Regional Development, **Emma Reimer**, Administrator. Members of staff can be contacted by email by using their first name followed by @lawcentres.org.uk

Please let us know if you have news about your Law Centre:

Staff Changes • New Initiatives • New Funding • Case Successes • Meetings and AGMs