WE’VE GOT SOMETHING

LAW CENTRES REPRESENT ONLY A VERY SMALL PART OF PUBLIC LEGAL SERVICES PROVISION, BUT IT IS AN IMPORTANT PART. WE DELIVER A RICH STRATEGIC MIX OF SERVICES, AND WE DELIVER IT IN AREAS WHERE IT IS MOST NEEDED. WE:
What makes these methods of delivery possible? Above all, management committees. These are the partnerships, at work in every Law Centre, between qualified lawyers and elected/appointed management committees comprising representatives of community organisations, legal and advice networks, local authorities and of course many committed individuals, including ex-clients. These are so much more accountable to, and in touch with, the communities they serve than any distant bureaucracy. It is this structure that not only protects the independence and the flexibility that are so vital to our work, but also helps staff to target resources where they are most needed.

In order to preserve and develop the contribution that Law Centres make, two things are crucial. First, Law Centres themselves must strengthen and deepen their roots in their localities, and strengthen their management committees accordingly. The government must recognise the distinctive character of Law Centres, and must join up its thinking about how they are funded. It must establish a central stream of funding for Law Centres, it must require the Legal Services Commission to show more flexibility and understanding, and it must persuade local authorities to adopt more rational, consistent and supportive funding policies towards Law Centres.

As lawyers, Law Centre workers do what lawyers do best – we take cases, where necessary, all the way, and vindicate fully the rights of our clients however ‘ordinary’ they may be. We defend the rule of law. But we do that also through community empowerment, capacity building, removing barriers and improving the delivery of public services in our localities; they contribute enormously to what is often called ‘social inclusion’ and building ‘social capital’. It’s about enabling participation and adding value. Above all it’s about delivering access.

- act in specialist and cutting-edge cases;
- support clients who require extra time and attention;
- undertake policy work on law and procedure;
- aid community development by supporting key networks;
- carry out educative work;
- liaise with local providers and agencies to improve the delivery of public services;
- involve the local community;
- connect with government.
IT HAS BEEN A CHALLENGING YEAR FOR ALL THOSE WORKING IN AND FOR COMMUNITY LAW CENTRES. THE DEMAND FOR HIGH QUALITY LEGAL ADVICE AND REPRESENTATION ACROSS THE WHOLE RANGE OF SOCIAL WELFARE LAW HAS NEVER BEEN GREATER.

Very many of the people struggling to deal with problems in housing and homelessness, employment, immigration, asylum, welfare benefits, debt and discrimination have little chance, in the absence of a Law Centre, of finding a level playing field or equality of arms.

The Legal Services Commission (LSC) is one of our most important partners. All Law Centres (and the LCF itself) are funded at least in part by the LSC. We have a duty to speak truth to power. The LSC, with its introduction over this last year of a unified contract, fixed fees and the notion of competitive tendering, has been making it more difficult for those in need of such services to find proper access to the good legal advice that they need.

Some local authorities too have been making it more difficult for Law Centres to deliver, by reducing the level of support that they provide. The Conservative administration in Hammersmith and Fulham for example slashed the grant of the Law Centre by 60% without offering any reasons.

The LCF has been at the forefront of challenging the misconceived policies of the LSC, working with a wide range of lawyers, advisers and groups, including the Access to Justice Alliance, the Advice Services Alliance and the Law Society. We have pointed out that fixed fees and competitive tendering are inappropriate for the work we do, and that one size contract does not fit all. It is absurd and destructive to force just 60 Law Centres with their particular approach to operate in exactly the same way as thousands of other providers – solicitors firms and other agencies. This drive is born of a particularly blinkered centralism, and if pushed to its conclusion will constitute a lamentable act of social vandalism – the destruction of the special and valuable contribution that Law Centres have been able to make in so many communities for so many years.

The work goes on. The development team have worked tirelessly, in both London and the regions, supporting Law Centres – generating funding, organising management training, and advising about compliance with the new unified contract.

At the heart of our work is the conviction that every person, whoever they are and whatever their position, is entitled to justice. Our notion of justice is based on the fundamental view that all people are equal. So the pursuit of equal treatment is central to what Law Centres do. I am pleased to be able to report in that context that the LCF has had great success in developing disability rights and young people’s projects. We now have 13 disability rights workers in Law Centres, undertaking 544 cases and educating the public on their rights, we have helped Law Centres reach 1,875 young people with advice and support, and raised £1,243,724 for Law Centres to develop this work.

We thank the community Law Centres, the Legal Services Commission, the London Councils, the Big Lottery Fund, Disability Rights Commission, Department for Communities and Local Government, the Baring Foundation, City Bridge Trust, City Parochial Foundation, Allen & Overy and those who support the LCF.

We thank all the staff of the LCF for their hard work and commitment. We say farewell to our Director, Steve Hynes and thank him for the hard work, sound judgement, deep commitment and manifest decency with which he steered the LCF for five years. We also thank Metin Kemal, our Regional Development Manager and Savita Narian, SORBAEE Project Manager, who left us this year. LCF continues to build on their excellent work and thanks them all for their dedication and skill.

We thank Devi Clark for stepping in to act so surely and so well as Interim Director. Finally, we welcome in February 2008 a new Director, Julie Bishop. Julie joins us from Australia, from her post as Director the National Association of Community Legal Centres. We very much look forward to working with her on the challenges of the year ahead.

JOHN FITZPATRICK, Chair
DIRECTOR’S REPORT
A YEAR OF CHANGE

OF OVERWHELMING CONCERN TO LAW CENTRES THIS YEAR HAS BEEN THE PROPOSED CHANGES TO THE LEGAL SERVICES COMMISSION CONTRACTS. THE CAMPAIGNING YEAR KICKED OFF WITH A HIGHLY CHARGED BUT CONTROLLED DEBATE WITH THE THEN LEGAL AID MINISTER VERA BAIRD QC AT OUR CONFERENCE IN NOVEMBER.

We followed up with a day of action in May with Law Centres protesting outside County Courts and most recently with open days in July to highlight the likely impact of the changes.

In common with other suppliers, Law Centres engaged in a game of brinkmanship with the LSC and government over signing the unified contract in April. In the end all Law Centres signed the contract, but our main concern remains that fixed fees will lead to a reduction in the specialist casework we undertake on behalf of clients.

LCF staff have been focusing on assisting Law Centres in dealing with the changes the fixed fee system demands, both in preparation and ultimately implementation. This includes funding crises which, regretfully, are likely to continue in the present climate. The London Unit played a key role in co-ordinating Law Centres applications for funding from London Councils and the Big Lottery and outside London LCF undertook similar work around the Big Lottery bids. Training on general management and managing the new LSC contracts also continues.

In recent years LCF has been particularly successful in securing support for equalities related projects. The SORBAAE project came to an end having delivered excellent training and the legacy of a well received DVD. The Disability Rights and Young People's projects have also been great successes in facilitating access to advice for those groups, gaining legal education case workers and funding for a number of Law Centres to deliver this work.

Our work around equalities law will continue and expand, in part supported by the successful bid to the Big Lottery Fund. We would also like to develop further our relationship with the EHRC, which came into being on 1st October, taking the opportunity to promote and extend the equalities work that is the centre of what Law Centres deliver to their communities. Despite the successes, much work remains to be done.

In immigration law, there has been a constant barrage of legislation from government in recent years which has meant the specialist caseworkers in Law Centres have had to become experts in adjusting to change. Immigration law illustrates what Law Centres do well, which is to provide specialist legal services to the poorest communities whom without our help would be excluded from enforcing their rights. Given our involvement in immigration work and the changes in the law, it is appropriate that "Immigration: Law Centres protecting fundamental rights" is the theme for our 2007 conference.

Internally, LCF saw two big changes this year. As funding from the Big Lottery for the Regional Development Department came to an end, LCF is reorganising its support for Law Centres. We are taking the opportunity to develop a national approach backed up by a successful bid to the Big Lottery Advice Plus funding stream, made jointly with other advice infrastructure organisations. The resource this funding brings will assist organisational and other changes in Law Centres, especially in gearing up for the introduction of "best value" tendering by the Legal Service Commission.

The other big change was LCF's office move. After twenty years at Duchess House the move was quite a wrench, but we secured reasonably located premises at a competitive price in Kentish Town. LCF is most grateful for the pro bono assistance we received from Allen & Overy in negotiating compensation for the termination of the tenancy at Duchess House.

Despite the upheavals, LCF has continued to enjoy much success in its work of supporting and representing Law Centres. I'd like to thank the staff for their dedication and hard work over what has been a difficult year. Their work is outlined in more detail in the following pages.

STEVE HYNES, Director
We continue to run excellent projects which have specific equality and diversity focuses: the Young People’s and Disability Rights projects. The SORBAEE (Sexual Orientation, Religion or Belief, Age, Employment Equality) project has now come to an end, but produced a well-received DVD on Sexual Orientation discrimination in partnership with Southwark Law Centre as a lasting legacy. These three projects are described in more detail on the following pages.

Developing our Equalities Focus
Our existing projects have achieved some excellent results. Sadly the projects are time limited but would benefit more clients if we were able to use what we have achieved to enhance the services we could offer to communities. For instance, work done by Law Centres Federation on employment discrimination needs to be embedded and expanded into other areas such as housing, education, goods, facilities and services.

Two new developments will allow the Law Centres Federation to build on the excellent work that is already undertaken internally and at the Law Centres.

The Disability Rights Project was highlighted in the Public Legal Education Task Force Report this year as a good example of national initiatives that combine casework with awareness raising and training. The creation of the Equalities and Human Rights Commission (EHRC) will allow us to build on the excellent relationship we already have with its predecessors, such as the Disability Rights Commission. We see this as a real opportunity to extend our projects both in geographical scope and to cover a wider range of equalities, discrimination and rights issues.

LCF has received confirmation of funding under the Big Lottery’s Advice Plus strand, as part of a bid co-ordinated by the Advice Services Alliance. The ‘Working Together for Advice’ project is jointly run with Citizens Advice, Advice UK, Youth Access and Age Concern. Developing equality and access to services across the advice sector is at the core of the project.

Funding under the project will allow the Law Centres Federation to appoint a new Equalities and Diversity Manager. He or she will have a strategic and operational remit for equalities work within LCF allowing us to provide even more focus to expanding and delivering equalities work to support Law Centres and their clients.

This ‘Working Together for Advice’ project will also support the creation of two new Law Centres with the aim of increasing access to justice to members of the community. We will also work with existing Law Centres and advice centre partners to improve access and referrals to existing services.
SORBAEE PROJECT

THE SORBAEE PROJECT, BUILT THE CAPACITY OF LAW CENTRES TO ADVISE AND RAISE AWARENESS OF THE SEXUAL ORIENTATION (SO), RELIGION OR BELIEF (RB) AND AGE EMPLOYMENT EQUALITY LEGISLATION.

THE PROJECT REACHED ITS CONCLUSION IN JUNE 2007.

The project fell into two parts. Funding from the Department for Communities and Local Government focussed on SORB legislation. A small amount of funding covered Age discrimination in a partnership with AdviceUK, Help the Aged, AdviceNow, Third Age Employment Network, DIAL and Youth Access.

Feedback from participating Law Centres was very positive. All Law Centres wanted the project to continue and expand its central focus into all seven strands of equalities legislation. The advisers and caseworkers who took part in the workshops and training events gained a lot in knowledge and experience, and enjoyed working and sharing with their colleagues aspects of their work and case law.

The SORBAEE project developed skills and resources within Law Centres to allow them to do awareness raising and public legal education work in their local communities. Minaxi Panchal, London Unit Training and Organisational Development Consultant ran four two-day Developing Training Skills courses between October and December 2006, aiming to give Law Centre workers the expertise in developing and providing good quality training meets the needs of its participants.

Small grants were available to Law Centres to run awareness raising activities at a local level. Decisions were deliberated over by a small panel consisting of Noeleen Adams, Stella Russell and Savita Narain. We are pleased to say that we managed to accommodate everyone's needs. Law Centres were encouraged to run activities between 22nd and 28th January 2007, to coincide with the Law Centres Federation’s first national ‘Equality through Justice’ campaign week.

In January the project launched a DVD, ‘Pride not Prejudice’, as an aid to those people wanting to identify and take forward a sexual orientation discrimination case to Tribunal and to use as a training DVD. The DVD has been requested by organisations from all over the country including Local Authorities, Trades Unions, Colleges and Universities. It is a fitting legacy for such a successful project.

An independent evaluation of the SORBAEE Project will be available at the Law Centres Federation Annual Conference in November 2007.

The Law Centres Federation would like to thank Cloisters Chambers, Allen & Overy, Manchester University and Halliwells for their expertise, help and support in delivering this project. Last but not least our thanks go to Savita Narain who made such a success of the project. Savita left the Law Centres Federation in June 07.

NOELEEN ADAMS,
London Project Manager

‘Many thanks – very valuable advice I felt as an employer more supported’

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NOELEEN ADAMS,
London Project Manager

‘Very helpful day – I will be reviewing my stock of guidelines and policies’

(Top) Ben Summerskill CEO of Stonewall and Commissioner at the EHRC speaking at the launch of SORBAEE 18th January 2007 & (Below) Baroness Margaret Prosser of Battersea OBE, Commissioner at the EHRC

Did you know that workers are now protected from being discriminated against because of their religion or belief?

Free and confidential information and advice is available from your local Law Centre

Go to www.lawcentres.org.uk for Law Centre contact details

Funded by Religion or Belief Employment Rights

The LCF is a registered charity no. 1088588 & company limited by guarantee (Eng) no. 2433492. Law Centre® is a registered trademark.
Since the project started in December 2005, Law Centres have delivered national casework and legal education tackling disability discrimination, particularly in relation to Part III of the Disability Discrimination Act. A total of 544 cases have been dealt with, of which 347 are Part III specific.

The project structure was created using a regional model mirroring the Law Centres ethos of access to justice, by placing the service in the middle of the communities that needed them most. Disability Rights Workers were employed in 13 Law Centres: Gateshead, Newcastle, Trafford, Rochdale, Kirklees, Sheffield, Chesterfield, Leicester, Coventry, Luton, Avon & Bristol, South West London and Camden Law Centres plus a fourteenth based at The Disability Law Service to cover the South East and provide additional support on a national basis.

The focus of this project included the provision of legal education for the general public and service providers about their rights and obligations with regard to reasonable adjustments for disabled people. Over 1000 hours has been spent delivering a legal education service to organisations from local NGOs to national organisations. As expected, the success of the legal education has led to an increase in individual cases dealt with by the Disability Rights Workers.

DRC and the LCF have been able to ensure a high level of visibility for the project and have used evidence learned from the experiences of our clients to influence policy at a national level. Statistics from the project which showed that cases of disabled clients tend to take longer than average were used in the debate about the moved to fixed fees for legal aid.

With the work of our funder and partner the DRC being taken over by the new EHRC, we were pleased when funding was extended by six months to March 2008. We are looking forward at ways we can use the learning from this project to develop and extend our disability into related and other equalities areas with them.

CASE STUDY

STEVE WILKINSON

Steve Wilkinson tried to book medical seating on a Thomas Cook flight to Paphos in Greece. Mr Wilkinson has spina bifida and would be unable to travel in any other seat, but Thomas Cook would not confirm whether Mr Wilkinson seating until the morning of the outward flight nor for the return journey until he arrived at the airport on the day of the return flight.

Angela Hamilton, the Disability Rights Worker based at Newcastle Law Centre lodged a claim alleging that Thomas Cook unlawfully discriminated against him in the provision of its services, contrary to the Disability Discrimination Act 1995.

Thomas Cook offers customers the option of reserving seats with extra legroom, seats together or aisle/window seats, subject to availability. Customers are told at the point of booking whether or not there are any available on a particular flight. In failing to provide information on availability until the day of travel, Thomas Cook treated Mr Wilkinson less favourably than it would have treated others who wished to book the seat of choice.

District Judge Stapely issued a Declaration of Discrimination against Thomas Cook stating that they discriminated against Mr Wilkinson and also awarded him compensation.

The ruling sets a precedent for the courts and is expected to make it easier for others facing discrimination when travelling. Mr Wilkinson commented, “I am delighted with this result as it’s not easy arranging holidays when you are a wheelchair user, and this decision will help a lot of people.”
The Young People’s Project has gained valuable insights into young people’s legal advice needs and best practice and has offered assistance with capacity building, project management, fundraising and policy support.

The Young Peoples Project has worked with almost all London Law Centres, most closely with those Law Centres that pioneered young people’s legal advice, Streetwise Community Law Centre and the StreetLegal Project attached to Enfield Law Centre, as well as with those projects inspired by them in Barnet, Islington, Hackney, Kingston & Richmond, Tower Hamlets and Thamesmead Law Centres, where legal advisors run outreach sessions in youth centres, colleges and Connexions. In September, Springfield Law Centre based in Springfield Psychiatric Hospital employed a new dedicated adviser funded by Comic Relief to provide legal advice to young, in- and out-patients of the hospital.

Evidencing Young People’s Needs for Legal Advice

The Young People’s Project works closely with Youth Access to promote the evidence around young people’s legal advice needs. The Legal Services Research Centre Report Young People and Civil Justice shows that an alarming 58% of young people faced legal problems without obtaining advice.

Department for Communities and Local Government DCLG figures from March 2007 showed that nearly 40% of people accepted by Local Authorities as homeless are aged 16-24.

Models of Good Practice

The Rights to Access Report, an independent evaluation into young people’s legal advice services, by Mike Bell Associates praises Streetwise and StreetLegal and details dramatic evidence on the long term outcomes they achieve. These include; better health, feeling safer, increased take up of education, training, employment, accessing services, better relationships. 20% of the young people said that they thought they would be dead had they not received the legal advice they did. Others reported that they would have been sectioned, had their children taken into care or been imprisoned.

Funding – the missing piece of the jigsaw.

Young people’s needs are stark, the models of good practice are developed, Law Centre staff have the expertise and commitment and local youth projects are eager to work in partnership. Sourcing appropriate funding against a backdrop of legal aid reforms and reconfiguration of Connexions services remains a challenge. Some examples of successes are:

- London Councils Youth Homelessness Projects.
- Streetwise Community Law Centre and Tower Hamlets Law Centre led bids in partnership with other Law Centres to tackle youth homelessness in London.

Collectively, they were awarded over £1 million which will equate to between 6 and 7 full time young people’s housing workers delivering outreach services, casework and training across 24 London boroughs.

- Young people’s legal advice work in North London will be sustained by a London Legal Support Trust Bridging Grant
- Streetwise’s young people’s led disability benefits take-up campaigns have been funded by Bromley and Croydon’s Youth Opportunities Funds

Sharing Good Practice and Developing Pan-London Services

- The Young People’s Project convenes with Youth Access the London Youth Advice Forum, a network of Law Centres and Youth Information and Advice Centres working across London to increase young people’s access to legal advice.
- Increasing Young People’s Access to Education and Immigration Advice:

  The Young Peoples Project has set up networks of London Law Centre Education Advisors and London Law Centre Immigration Advisors; establishing referral systems, sharing good practice and working towards Pan-London services for young people.

- Recognition from Gordon Brown

  Patrick Friel, an ex-client and Management Committee member of Streetwise Law Centre was featured in Gordon Brown’s book ‘Britain’s Everyday Heroes’, published in June 2007.

Mandy Wilkins, Young People’s Project Manager
Carter Reforms
The Carter Reforms influenced our work enormously this year. We did our best to keep abreast of the plethora of documents and policy changes announced by the Legal Services Commission (LSC) and to keep member Law Centres informed.

Many of the changes to the delivery of legal services under contract from the Legal Services Commission required fundamental changes to the way in which contracts are complied with. The change from recording casework in hours to receiving a fixed fee per case could potentially have serious consequences for the future of Law Centre services. We involved Law Centres whenever we could, consulting with them and feeding back to the Legal Services Commission their comments and criticisms.

One of the most critical changes was the need to comply with new electronic reporting requirements. Law Centres that had previously used AIMs case management system were forced to purchase a different system before the run up to 1st October as AIMs did not meet the new LSC requirement.

This change prompted the Law Centres Federation to join with AdviceUK to examine whether we could seize the opportunity to develop our own case management system. Our intention is to begin the process of accessing headline data that would inform social policy, giving the LCF vital information to make the case for Law Centres and their clients.

On September 10th we launched, in partnership with AdviceUK and Pivotal Information Systems, AdvicePro. The system is still in development and requires the input of focus groups of caseworkers to ensure it meets their needs.

New Law Centres
Agencies that recognise the value of the specialist legal services that Law Centres can offer have been working with us with a view to becoming full LCF members. Under the umbrella of 'Action for Life', Cambridge and Huntingdon Law Centres were launched earlier this year. With only one other Law Centre in the Eastern region, these Law Centres will fill a huge gap in provision in the area.

There will also be a new Law Centre in Birmingham. B-MAG (Birmingham Money Advice and Grants) which was launched as Birmingham Law Centre in October. This is an exciting and much welcome development and will greatly enhance Law Centre services for people in Britain’s second largest city.
DEVELOPMENT AND SUPPORT OF LAW CENTRES

TRAINING

The Development Units continue to successfully provide tailored training and support initiatives to Law Centres based on the needs which arise.

In London, we provided numerous training courses during the year mainly on fixed fees, the new unified contract and immigration and asylum. This included a joint conference with AdviceUK on contracting matters in May 07. In addition Noeleen Adams and Georgina Morgan (Manager, Tower Hamlets Law Centre) ran workshops in London on how to translate current work patterns into fixed fees and exceptional case costs. Our thanks go to Allen & Overy for providing the LCF with such a fabulous space and for being so hospitable.

In the regions, training courses designed to assist Law Centres to cope with the changes in their LSC contracts were run in Birmingham and Manchester and individual support has been given to numerous Law Centres across the country. Law Centres have also been getting to grips with the Mental Capacity Act which has recently been fully implemented and will have a huge impact on Law Centre’s work with incapacitated clients. The Regional Unit put on a well received training session in Birmingham with Kam Chahal, from Harehills and Chapeltown Law Centre as the trainer.

The Management Training programme in London has now been productively rolled out for two successive years with continued support provided to participants through one to one coaching and mentoring. One significant outcome of the Management Programme has been the ability for people from different Law Centres to support and encourage each other through times of change and uncertainty. One to one coaching and mentoring support has proved beneficial in empowering individuals to responsibly contribute to their own personal development and to that of their organisation. Our thanks are extended to Clifford Chance for providing the LCF with space and making us so welcome and well fed during training activities.

The Regional Forums continue to be successful in sharing information between Law Centres, promoting good practice and encouraging support between workers. As well as meeting up, the forums have led to much greater networking generally between Law Centres. This has greatly assisted many Law Centres that would otherwise be isolated from one another.

The continued support by the Development and Support Units has seen marked improvements in joint working, sharing of like practices and furtherance of shared goals.

“People who come to Law Centres for help rarely have one single problem. Their problems are frequently multifaceted and have integrated legal and non legal elements. For example, the person who comes in with debt problems will often go on to mention other issues such as domestic violence, housing and schooling for their children. I am extremely impressed with the holistic approach Lambeth Law Centre has taken to address this reality by pulling together expertise from a range of organisations to provide an all round service.”

Baroness Scotland QC, Attorney General, at the opening of Lambeth Law Centre’s new offices on 2nd October 2007.
London Councils initiated a major commissioning programme for the next four years. London Councils are a very important funder both of Law Centres in London and the Law Centres Federation London Unit.

Commissioning is taking place over a twelve month period in four separate stages. It is a period of uncertainty but we remain positive that Law Centres will do well. The majority of our London Law Centre Network meetings were on this single subject alone. The London Unit is submitting a partnership bid with AdviceUK London for support services to advice agencies in London. They will know by April 2008 whether they are successful.

The announcement from the Big Lottery that there was to be funding for advice, the Advice Plus programme, was greeted with much enthusiasm by many Law Centres. The LCF assisted several Law Centres with their applications. The fund was greatly oversubscribed and the success rate nationally was around 13%. Many congratulations to those Law Centres that were successful. In the regions this included Bradford, Cambridge, Coventry, Huntingdon, Isle of Wight, Nottingham, Rotherham and Saltley and Nechells Law Centres.

Bradford Law Centre was successful in its application to the Big Lottery for an employment discrimination caseworker. Working with local communities, the project will focus on providing advice to those ‘hard-to-reach’ groups with little awareness of their rights, as for instance, migrant workers and Asian women workers.

In London, two Law Centres were successful in receiving funding from the Big Lottery Advice Plus funding stream: Springfield Law Centre and Tower Hamlets Law Centre. In addition Tower Hamlets received funding from the London Legal Support Trust to launch an initiative to expand Law Centre services across East London. This will assist the London Unit to fulfil its ambition to have a Law Centre service in every London Borough. It will also explore any opportunity to prepare for advice needs for those people who are or will be affected by the Olympics.

Devon Law Centre has set up an Asylum Appellate Project which aims to address the failings of the public funding arrangements for asylum appeals. Funded by the Lankelly Chase Foundation and the AB Charitable Trust, the Project will assist any asylum seeker in Devon and Cornwall to appeal against the refusal of representation (CLR) regardless of the merits of the case.

The Law Centre recognises that the Project is far too local and on too small a scale to address the extent of the problem and influence policy and they are working with Law Centres Federation with a view to launching a national initiative in the future.

Many Law Centres have been successful in getting LSC funding for trainee solicitors. Congratulations go to Cambridge, Camden, Chesterfield, Coventry, Hammersmith & Fulham, Hillingdon, Kirklees, Rochdale and Sheffield Law Centres that were successful in the last round.
DEVELOPMENT AND SUPPORT OF LAW CENTRES
CLACs, CLANS & ISWLS

CLACs & CLANs
Gateshead Law Centre formed a partnership with the CAB to form the first Community Legal Advice Centre in the country. Opening in May 2007, the Centre provides a range of services from basic advice to representation at court in debt, welfare benefits, housing and employment, family, mental health and community care.

The Law Centre and CAB have maintained their separate identities and so far their separate premises. However joint premises are being sought and merger talks are ongoing. The Gateshead CLAC, a company limited by guarantee with members of the Law Centre and CAB on its governing body, employs the CLAC co-ordinator who manages the contracts. The CLAC has a subcontracting arrangement with 3 private practice firms.

Last year, Leicester Law Centre submitted a bid for the proposed Leicester CLAC but this was rejected by the LSC. The Law Centre had proposed dealing with 5,000 general help enquiries (rather than over 9,000 in the specification), while it recruited staff to cope with a higher capacity. A further bidding round has been opened this year.

Anticipating the setting up of a CLAC in Derby, Derby Law Centre has merged with the CAB. The merged organisation will be known as the Citizens Advice and Law Centre. In June 2007, the LSC and Derby CC announced their plans for a Derby CLAC and bids were submitted by September this year.

‘A merger makes sense for our clients and for the future of a combined delivery of social welfare and legal advice for the people of Derby...we have a real belief in the benefits of the concept of the type of legal advice centre that will emerge as a result of this mutually beneficial merger.’ Sue Holmes, Derby Law Centre

Further announcements of CLACs have been made in recent months in Wakefield, Portsmouth and Hull. None of these areas have a Law Centre, although Hull did – it was only in 2005 that the Law Centre closed its doors.

Two CLANs have also been announced in Cornwall and in East Riding of Yorkshire. at the launch of the Cornwall CLAN Vera Baird stated:
‘The core objectives for any Network will be firstly, that once a client contacts any part of the Network they will have access to the help they need to resolve their multiple problems; and secondly, to reduce the amount of times a client needs to be referred on, ... An “end-to-end” service in Networks must go beyond just signposting clients to other local organisations but instead operate a full client management system.’

In London we have yet to see the launch of a CLAC or a CLAN. In London the term used by the London Office of the LSC is ISWLS (Integrated Social Welfare Law Service). Barking & Dagenham Law Centre have so far have expressed an interest. Initial discussions have been held with Hounslow, Lewisham, Islington, Lambeth, Tower Hamlets, Brent, Walthamstow, Haringey and Hammersmith & Fulham. Camden, Hackney & Ealing are to follow.

Some Law Centres have anticipated the setting up of CLACs or CLANs in their areas and set up their own Networks.

Nottingham Law Centre has been involved in setting up ‘Advice Nottingham’ which plans to provide:
- Core advice services including triage, general advice and casework services on a co-ordinated timetable.
- Access to advice across the City and timely referral into specialist casework.
- One public telephone number as a point of entry to Advice Nottingham services.

- A reconfigured advice service that will enable the development of cross city specialist and niche projects to meet the needs for advice in specific advice areas or to specific client groups;
- An integrated LSC contract that funds core providers to deliver casework and specialist advice. The Law Centre would be the lead agency, holding the contract and putting arrangements in place with other agencies to deliver the required outputs. The Law Centre would be responsible for all quality, monitoring, targets and liaison with the LSC.
- Consistent quality control and co-ordinated city wide policies on referral, confidentiality, advisor competence, training and workforce development.

Metin Kemal
Metin Kemal, the Regional Development Manager left the LCF in March this year. Metin will be remembered mostly for all his work in setting up new Law Centres in Devon, Surrey, Bury, Stockport, Trafford, Isle of Wight, Cambridge and Huntingdon and most recently in Kirklees. The LCF thanks Metin for all his hard work and commitment to Law Centres and wishes him well for his future life in Cyprus.

NOELEEN ADAMS, MINAXI PANCHAL and STELLA RUSSELL
The Joseph Rowntree Foundation showed inequality had reached levels not seen for over 40 years.

The social reality

According to government research one in five children are living in relative poverty. Educational qualifications, discrimination, disability and ill health and family form and structure all play a role in poverty rates. Poverty clusters around certain ethnic groups, for example they are highest for Bangladeshis, Pakistanis and Black Africans. Research has found that one in four people experience some kind of mental health problem during the course of a year; one in five people of working age are disabled; one in five single women pensioners live in poverty. The number of languages in use in the UK is growing. Even back in 2001, government research estimated that 1 to 1.5 million people lacked the English skills required to function in society, resulting in higher levels of poverty.

It is more difficult for those in poverty to vindicate their rights. Government is concerned to overcome the barriers that people face. So we have seen the introduction of a plethora of laws and initiatives to promote equality and cohesiveness and to tackle social exclusion. However, passing legislation is meaningless if people are not aware of the law and do not have access to advisers and representatives to help them uphold their rights.

LAW CENTRE PROJECTS

Routes to Integration and Inclusion

Routes to Integration and Inclusion is run by Advice for Life including Cambridge and Huntingdon Law Centres. Funded by EU (EQUAL), the project focused on understanding and delivering an holistic approach to IAG for migrant workers in Cambridgeshire.

The project has:
- Worked with 208 clients via interviews, group work, email, phone or letter.
- Won over £25,000 of financial settlements for clients
- Uncovered gaps in the provision which undermine the ability of migrant workers to participate in the workplace or take up their rights
- Participated in three research projects, several regional and national conferences and influenced policy and practise in the region
- Developed the Migrant Gateway website www.migrantgateway.eu
- Developed publicity and information for employers, trade unions and migrants in a range of languages.

In their first year, the two legal guidance clinics saw 137 clients. Seven pro bono lawyers gave 76 hours free advice and guidance covering a range of issues, about a third of which are not normally dealt with by the Law Centre and its local partners.

The Law Centre is developing a strategy to ensure that these volunteer services can be maintained after the end of Big Lottery funding in June 2008.

Tower Hamlets Vulnerable Workers Project

The Vulnerable Workers Project was launched at Tower Hamlets Law Centre on 6th November 2007. The project is taking a new approach by working in partnership and building links between the trade union movement, the advice and community sector, including the Law Centre, and statutory employment bodies, utilising the strengths of each to demonstrate a sustainable, working model to enable workers to secure their employment rights.

The project is being piloted in Tower Hamlets and the city and aimed at workers in the Building Services sector, the majority of whom are in cleaning or security. If successful it is likely that the project could be rolled out to other parts of the country and include other sectors.

Bury Law Centre - Volunteer Services Development Project

Bury Law Centre’s Big Lottery funded Volunteer Services Development:
- An evening clinic based at the Law Centre
- A daytime outreach clinic at a community centre in Bury’s most deprived ward with multi-lingual provision for the large local Punjabi community
- An initial employment advice clinic developed in partnership with the Employment Lawyer’s Association and LawWorks
- A helpdesk reception and signposting service providing information to over 100 people per month and raising awareness of Bury Law Centre.
Legal aid is about equality – ensuring that people are not put at a serious disadvantage in the courts. Legal aid enables individuals to challenge the state and hold policy and decision-makers to account – an important component of a vibrant and democratic society.

An unprecedented amount of legislation has been passed in recent years. This was illustrated in a debate in the House of Commons in the summer where it was reported that in the last ten years, in crime alone, 3,000 new offences had been created. Any reduction in access to legal help is a reduction in access to justice and the creation of a safe and fairer society.

There has been a rise in demand for legal assistance with the increase of legislation in recent years, and this combined with additional costs in the higher criminal courts and in care proceedings, has resulted in legal aid expenditure rising. To stem the increase, and what many see as draconian, changes have been introduced. As a result solicitors in private practice are increasingly unable to subsidise their legal aid work and are pulling out. Law Centres and others in the not-for-profit sector are bracing themselves for the increase this will make to their workloads.

When Law Centres started, legal aid did not tackle the causes of poverty – poor housing, exploitation and discrimination in the workplace, access to benefits, etc. It did not have an overall strategic objective – such as tackling social exclusion. Law Centres filled this gap, by using the law to improve peoples’ lives and that of the communities in which they were based. They believe in being accountable and responsive to local need and by so doing build up trust and community empowerment. They provided complimentary and supportive services, avoided duplication, building up a pattern of services appropriate to the needs of the community.

It is difficult to be convinced that enforced competition will improve upon this model – a model where preventative work runs alongside finding long-term solutions and where services are targeted to meet the needs of the disadvantaged and where public bodies are held to account. Law Centres are there to help reduce poverty and its related problems including criminal activities. They help create more cohesive neighbourhoods, active and more empowered communities.

The Law Centre model is recognised and admired throughout the world. It will be tragic if this model is destroyed, or as one our Law Centres workers who has worked in a Centre for the last 30 years said, it will be disaster to kill the goose that laid the golden egg.
THE LEGAL SERVICES COMMISSION FORGED AHEAD THIS YEAR WITH THEIR PLANS TO INTRODUCE BEST VALUE COMPETITIVE TENDERING IN 2009, AND ARE GEARING UP THE ‘MARKET PLACE’ TO MAKE IT MORE ATTRACTIVE TO PRIVATE COMPANIES SO THAT THEY ARE ABLE TO TENDER FOR CONTRACTS IN THE FUTURE.

Many fear that this will result in quantity of advice taking precedence over quality, particularly when pressure is applied to produce statistics showing that more and more people have been seen.

Of concern is the likelihood that vulnerable people – the disadvantaged and marginalised – will have cases deemed too complicated and time consuming to take on in this competitive environment. Law Centres therefore have questioned whether there can be greater justice for people who are socially excluded when competitiveness is the key driver.

Parliamentary Concerns
Proposals to change community legal services were finalised last year; followed through this spring with the LSC requesting that all Law Centres sign up to a new unified contract on 1st October, and comply with a system of fixed fees for every case taken on. Opposition was fairly unanimous in the legal professions as well as by Members of Parliament who voiced their discontent at several debates in parliament.

In January, the Constitutional Affairs Committee began an inquiry into the implementation of the Carter Review of Legal Aid. Three debates held in Westminster Hall gave a good indication of the growing concern about the proposals. In December, Karen Buck, MP for Kensington and Chelsea said for example, ‘Organisations are concerned that the caps on time per case could hit vulnerable clients, who mainly opt for the not-for-profit sector rather than the private sector. Those vulnerable clients include many people from black and ethnic minority groups, clients with multiple problems, language issues, mental health problems and chaotic lives. Inevitably, cases that involve such challenging clients take longer.’ She argued that this would particularly impact on Law Centres based in London.

The cross-party Committee headed by Alan Beith MP heard evidence on five occasions and published their final report in May. The Committee was critical of the speed with which the proposals were being implemented, the lack of statistical evidence and the threat the changes posed for access to justice. They advised that the reforms must not be allowed to cause irreversible damage to the legal aid system saying, ‘Providing effective access to justice is a basic tenet of the rule of law and core characteristic of the welfare state.’

Following the publication of the report, a further debate was held in Westminster Hall in July. Again there was substantial opposition. Henry Bellingham MP, Shadow Minister for Justice for example predicted that in small market towns like those in East Anglia there will be a significant contraction of the number of firms providing legal aid and that people will have to travel much further.

Unfortunately, despite the importance of access to legal services, there hasn’t been an opportunity for government to debate the reforms on the floor of either the House of Commons or the House of Lords.

Centralising and Standardisation
The Legal Services Commission published ‘Transforming Legal Services’ in March. In this corporate plan the LSC said that they will be the ones making specific decisions about the nature, scope and location of supply and will select providers appropriately over the next five years. Law Centres are deeply committed to serving the legal needs of their local communities and being accountable to them. Local people value their independence. It is feared that this centralisation, ‘top-down’ approach will alienate and disempower people.

The LSC also reaffirmed their pledge to move towards block contracts and fixed prices in the next five years. There is a deep seated belief that large contracts to fewer suppliers will bring substantial benefits. However, in LCF evidence to the Constitutional Affairs Committee, we challenged this view and referred to a Treasury paper, ‘Aggregation – is bigger always better?’ which questioned the effectiveness of offering large contracts. The Treasury paper pointed to the possible distortion of the market, missing out on innovation, the inability to respond to local needs, and entailing disproportionately lengthy and costly procurement processes.
Law Centres signed as they recognised that they could not survive without funding from the Legal Services Commission. An evaluation of how the new strategy with effect services to vulnerable clients is critical.

The Law Centres Federation is worried that this move towards regularising services and the emphasis on meeting centrally set casework targets, will damage the range of legal support to local communities that Law Centres have developed over the years. We are concerned that the centralisation of decision-making, will diminish Law Centres’ ability to respond appropriately and flexibly to local issues. They may lose their community base, their innovation, their strategic approach to solving community problems, and the trust and support they have from community groups and representatives. This positioning, and the skills developed have been nurtured and admired since the opening of the first pioneering Law Centre in the late 1960’s. The loss of these characteristics will be a fundamental loss to the Law Centres movement and especially to the communities they serve.

Anxiety about the reforms led to many Law Centres to join the Access to Justice Alliance protest ‘Justice – Access Denied’ to let people know about the impact of the changes on services. In May, Law Centre workers along with legal aid solicitors and advice agencies stood outside county courts to let people know about their concerns. This was followed by a series of open days at Law Centres in July.

**Integration**

Integrated Social Welfare Law Services is a new concept introduced by the Legal Services Commission this year and covers both Community Legal Advice Centres (CLACs) and Community Legal Advice Networks (CLANs). The first CLAC was opened in May 2007 in Gateshead. It is run jointly by the Law Centre based there and the local Citizens Advice Bureau with the support of the three local firms of solicitors. In March, the Legal Services Commission announced that they had agreed to work with Cornwall County Council on the setting up of the first CLAN. Since then, the LSC promised another CLAN in the East Riding of Yorkshire, and a further five CLACs based in Derby, Hull, Leicester (second invitation to tender issued in July 2007), Portsmouth and Wakefield.

One of the key tenets for the new CLACs and CLANs is achieving a co-ordinating funding basis, with local authorities as key partners. Next April, each local council will have a duty to set up a Local Area Agreement. The Agreement will be based on both national and local targets. Although access to legal and advice services is not identified as one of the 35 targets, this work will we hope be recognised as an important tool that authorities can use to achieve their objectives.

The setting up of CLACs and CLANs is part of the move to reduce the number of suppliers and a step towards giving just one large contract to a few providers. This will save on LSC’s administrative costs, but might we fear create monopolies, possibly introduce conflicts of interest, limit choice and reduce access.

The LCF has been concerned about the lack of consultation on the planning of services and following intervention from NCVO – the National Council for Voluntary Organisations – on possible breaches of the Compact agreement between central government and the voluntary section this is set to improve. We look forward now to a new era of improved communication and partnership.

It has been a turbulent year. It was with some dismay we read that Jack Straw MP, the new Lord Chancellor and Secretary of State at the Ministry of Justice had said at the Labour Party conference that legal aid should be cut. It looks like we will have another turbulent and challenging year ahead.

LYNN EVANS, Policy Manager
The most significant achievements have been the dissemination of information and materials on the Carter Reforms which will have a huge impact on Law Centre clients seeking access to legal aid.

The project made an important contribution to the various debates in London on the legal aid reforms, including a presentation to the London Funders Group and to officers from the Government Office for London. Each Law Centre received briefings that could be adapted and sent to local MPs. An on-line petition for members of the public was placed on the LCF website and a publicity flyer ‘Legal Aid in Crisis’ was distributed to Law Centres for their use and dissemination. We also wrote on behalf of Law Centres and their clients to all London MPs and to the Secretary of State for Communities and Local Government on how the proposed Legal Aid changes will threaten the sustainability of Law Centres and the valuable contribution of Law Centres to the community.

IRIS Suen, London Policy and Research Officer

Iris and her team took part in the London Legal Support Trust Walk raising over £1,000 for the Trust. Iris Suen and Bobby Chan (Central London Law Centre)

A Research study focused on providing evidence about the likely impact of the changes on clients, including the time needed to advise and represent clients in London. This evidence was used to inform debates on an enhanced fee for lawyers operating London, and contributed to the paper, ‘Case for London’ which will be launched at the LCF conference in November 2007. The study aims to documents the complexity of longer cases in the capital to assist our members in making the case for further resources. Research work has also covered mental health and employment tribunals. In November 2006, we assisted Springfield Law Centre, the only Law Centre based in a mental health hospital, on gathering evidence of needs for legal advice services within the Springfield Hospital Trust as part of a funding bid. We are pleased that Springfield now has funds to continue its services.

In June 2007, the LCF also sent out a Tribunal Representation questionnaire to all London Law Centres; our findings formed part of a report to London Councils showing the need for funding for tribunal representations at Employment Tribunal hearings in London.

IRIS Suen, London Policy and Research Officer

As we reported last year, LCF has been an active member of the Task Force set up in 2006 by the Ministry of Justice. The final report ‘Developing Capable Citizens’ was launched on 10th July. Lord Hunt, the new Minister for Legal Aid spoke saying that knowledge about the law can change lives, improve life chances, create safe and cohesive communities and enable active participation in democracy.

‘The Task Force has set out the case of increasing the availability of public legal education, developing good practice, improving evaluation, and longer-term funding. If we are serious about tackling inequality, then we all need to provide the right education, information and support at an early stage in appropriate ways.’

Chair of the Task Force, Professor Dame Hazel Genn DBE QC said at the launch that people lack the understanding, knowledge and skills to attack the causes of everyday problems with the confidence needed to reach good outcomes. Unsurprisingly, the most vulnerable groups in society are the least knowledgeable about solutions and routes to redress. She said that this leads to ‘unnecessary helplessness’ that has a significant cost (economists at the Ministry of Justice have estimated that over a 3-4 year period, the costs was around £13 million).

The paper noted the not-for-profit sector’s long-standing commitment to user empowerment saying, ‘It is not surprising that we have found excellent public legal education initiatives among advice agencies and Law Centres. For Law Centres, public legal education is also part of their explicit commitment to work with disadvantaged communities.’

The goal of the Task Force is have imaginative, sustained, and successful public legal education, embedded in our culture as part of effective citizenship.

Possession Prevention Project
Southwark Law Centre and Blackfriars Advice Centre worked in partnership to reduce evictions in Southwark by combining outreach, training and policy initiatives. In a report published in July the authors reported that:
‘Hundreds of people in Southwark lose their homes needlessly due to rent arrears. Many of these evictions could have been prevented if tenants had sought advice earlier. Early advice enables tenants to manage their debts before they spiral out of control and can increase their income by ensuring they claim all the benefits due to them. It also means that any housing benefit complication is untangled and sorted out at an early stage.’

The project worked with council housing staff, local community groups and advice providers combining a number of different approaches: the development of better information for council tenants; training for community groups to enable them to understand more about housing law and to recognise the problems, and take the steps needed to get proper attention paid to rent arrears and possession notices; and the critical advice and support to local authority housing staff to improve their own procedures and information.

The result of the project is that the number of evictions has gone down. This has brought cost savings to both tenants and the local council, and very importantly, a reduction of the social harm and knock-on effects caused by eviction. Local voluntary bodies and community groups can now act more effectively as early problem notifiers’, a local housing lawyers’ network has been established with a new referral system, and there is improved guidance for all local authorities on dealing with rent arrears which been developed by the Department for Communities and Local Government and the Civil Justice Council as part of the project.

Catherine Evans, director of Southwark Law Centre said:
‘The Possession Prevention Project is a good practice example of the value of funding preventative services. The combined impact of training and policy work that engages stakeholders across the voluntary and statutory sector has resulted in significant gains for advice providers, the local authority and, most importantly, the people of Southwark. It is hoped that the Project leaves a legacy of improved access to better quality advice and recognition on both sides of the importance of collaborative work between the local authority and those advising and representing tenants.’

This was a three year project run jointly by Southwark Law Centre and Blackfriars Advice Centre ending in April 2007. It was funding by the Legal Services Commission. An outline of the project was included in the Public Legal Education Task Force Report as an example of the benefits of public legal education at a local level.
Our fund balances have fallen over all this year, due to the utilisation of outstanding project expenditure against reserves. Our unrestricted reserves however have increased by over £25,000. Though still a long way from the level of free reserves we would like to have, it’s very positive to be able to improve our position at a time of such upheaval in the funding of advice.

Our turnover increased by 66%. In part this was because we became a much bigger distributor of funds to members, in particular on behalf of the Disability Rights Commission. Funders are increasingly keen to reduce their management costs by passing their responsibility and costs onto funded organisations. This places membership bodies like the LCF in a difficult position: refusing to act as the co-ordinator of these large grants on behalf of member Law Centres could prevent access to significant amounts of money at a time when other sources of income are under threat; accepting the co-ordination role fundamentally changes our relationships with our members, who become subcontractors, and puts the LCF at risk of being forced to run these programmes at a loss.

The very successful Sexual Orientation Religion Belief Age Employment Equality project, run by Savita Narain, came to an end this year. The project produced a well received DVD on the new rights around sexual orientation and funded many training courses on the five new strands of equality rights across the country. In an important innovation the project also linked with Law Centres in Scotland to raise awareness of these important new rights.

The Young People’s Project, funded by City Bridge Trust, continues to enjoy considerable success in co-ordinating services for young people across London Law Centres, but much work remains to be done in persuading government that a long term commitment to legal services aimed at young people is essential to support them in accessing their rights.

We continue to benefit from Legal Services Commission funding for our Directorate and policy work. This is complemented by substantial funding from London Councils to support Law Centres in the capital, and a Big Lottery Fund grant to support Law Centres across the rest of the country. The City Parochial Foundation helped us to develop policy and research in London. Thanks to them and to our other funders. We look forward to continuing these productive relationships in future years.

The future is, as usual, uncertain because our key funders change priorities and we have to keep our eyes open to opportunity.

Although it falls to me to write this report, the work in the reporting period (and there was lots of it) was done by Georgina Morgan. Georgina made the difficult decision to leave the Executive Committee in order to concentrate on her very demanding day job managing Tower Hamlets Law Centre. Our good wishes go with her.

MICHAEL ASHE, Acting Treasurer
This summarised financial information contains extracts from the statement of financial activities and balance sheet for the year ended 31st March 2007, but is not the full statutory report and accounts. The full financial statements were approved by the trustees on 29th October 2007 and subsequently submitted to the Charity Commission and Companies House. They received an unqualified audit report and copies may be obtained from the charity's head office.

Signed on behalf of the trustees on 29th October 2007
LCF EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE 2006/07

John Fitzpatrick  Chair  Management Committee  Hammersmith and Fulham Law Centre
Michael Ashe  Vice Chair  Management Committee  Southwark Law Centre (Appointed Treasurer 17th September)
Reita Clarke MBE  Vice Chair  Management Committee  Luton Law Centre
Maureen Vincent  Secretary  Staff  Brent Community Law Centre
Georgina Morgan  Treasurer  Staff  Tower Hamlets Law Centre (Left August 2007)

Management Committee Representatives

John Oke  Camden Community Law Centre
Brian Parker  Lambeth Law Centre
Cameron Philpot  Chesterfield Law Centre
Richard Palmer  Southwark Law Centre

Staff Representatives

Sean Canning  North Kensington Law Centre
Anne Hudson  Sheffield Law Centre (Left August 2007)
Teresa Waldron  Chesterfield Law Centre
Ruth Hayes  Islington Law Centre (Joined 30th April 2007)
Jane Waring  Rotherham Law Centre (Left March 2007)

Noeleen Adams  London Unit Manager
Victor Adetiba  Finance
Busayo Akinyemi  Disability Rights Project Manager
Lucy Bush  Temporary Executive Assistant (Joined October 2007)
Devi Clark  Interim Director (Joined September 2007)
Lynn Evans  Policy Manager
Steve Hynes  Director (Left August 2007)
Metin Kemal  Regional Development Unit Manager (Left March 2007)
Sarah Mills  Temporary Executive Assistant (Joined August 2007, left October 2007)
Michele Morgan  Executive Assistant (Left August 2007)
Savita Narian  SORBAEE Project Manager (Left June 2007)
Minaxi Panchal  London Training and Organisational Development
Stella Russell  Regional Development
Iris Suen  London Research and Policy
Mandy Wilkins  Young People’s Project Manager

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London Councils
LAW CENTRES FEDERATION
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