A Law Centre is an independent not-for-profit law practice. Law Centres want everyone to have equal access to justice. They target their services at the poorest and most disadvantaged people in their communities. For this reason, each Law Centre’s core services are free of charge. Law Centres seek to tackle the root causes of poverty and disadvantage.

We are the Law Centres Network (LCN), the national membership body for Law Centres. We support existing Law Centres to develop their services, so they can help more people in more ways. We assist Law Centres to work together, with one another and with other agencies. We are also the collective national voice of Law Centres.

Together, we use the law and advocacy to bring about social change for our communities.

We strive for a just and equal society where everyone’s rights are valued and protected.
Looking back, this year feels like it was full of momentous events. From the EU referendum, through the snap general election to devastating tragedy that is Grenfell, this period will surely be remembered as one that threw into relief the gross inequality created by austerity policies, as well as the increase in racism and hate crimes seemingly legitimised by Brexit.

Introduction
Pamela Fitzpatrick
Director, Harrow Law Centre
Chair, Law Centres Network

Grenfell demonstrated how cuts to legal aid can have genuinely tragic consequences. Residents at Grenfell had warned of a possible tragedy for years but no one listened. Without legal assistance it was impossible for residents to seek redress. I was humbled to attend a meeting with survivors and hear that our North Kensington Law Centre — which had swung into action immediately after the fire — was one of the few local organisations they trusted. The UK’s first Law Centre was proving its vital importance 47 years on.

It was also good to have the work of Law Centres formally recognised this year. South West London Law Centres’ immigration team won the Solicitors Journal Award for legal aid team of the year. In July, Sue James of Hammersmith and Fulham Law Centre received the Legal Aid Lawyer of the Year (LALY) award for Outstanding Achievement. Harrow Law Centre was also shortlisted for a LALY for best not-for-profit, and at the awards ceremony I was moved to see our professional community applaud North Kensington Law Centre for their ongoing work assisting Grenfell survivors.

It has been my pleasure and privilege to serve as chair of the Law Centres Network. As a Law Centre director, I can fully appreciate the impact that LCN has for its members. I am aware that, without the support of LCN, Law Centres would not be able to achieve quite such remarkable results as they get for clients. In a hostile climate for legal aid lawyers lasting well over a decade, LCN has played a significant role in ensuring that Law Centres can nevertheless thrive. Without the small but effective team at LCN, I think it likely that far fewer Law Centres would have survived the savage cuts to civil legal aid.

The Law Centre Network plays a unique and vital role in the access to justice environment. It punches well above its weight and long may it continue to do so.
Recently I met with a group of Law Centre managers. As each arrived, they sat down saying one version or another of ‘I’m overwhelmed, it never lets up’, not realising that the person who had arrived just before them had made a similar comment.

These are experienced managers who have led their respective Law Centres through the civil legal aid cuts and to growing new vital services within their communities. Each is used to hard work, multiple demands, seemingly insurmountable challenges and the unrelenting pressures. So what was it about this year?

Law Centres are typically small organisations with big ambitions, that listen to their local community and respond to it. As a result, there are always more things that must be done, and therefore more funds to be found, in order to establish, extend, reshape or simply open up services to more people. Yet funding is harder and harder to access so Law Centres, yet again, need to find new ways to creatively stretch available resources further. It just gets tiring.

Add to this the events of the past year, the cumulative impact of seven years of austerity, the decimation of ‘safety net’ services, the meanness of it all and so everyone is tired, but it is much more than that.

After Grenfell, we explored establishing a service to assist Law Centre staff deal with the emotional impact of assisting people who had just been through hell. What we realised was that Law Centres across the country are seeing more and more people every week who are severely traumatised, threatening suicide, self-harming, in a state of constant fury, with nowhere left to turn.

Law Centres bear witness to the impact on people of not being treated fairly on a daily basis, of the denial of services, of the impact of working hard but being paid so poorly that you cannot provide for your family’s needs. We see how this is amplified as a result of people being unable to access legal aid to challenge injustice, or even to find someone to listen. Ministry of Justice figures give some indication of the scale of this, showing that last year 846,000 people have not been helped by legal aid who would have been helped in 2013, before the cuts.

Bearing witness to this widening hardship comes with a responsibility: to never look away from it; to not allow others, especially local and central government, to look away from it; and to seek to right these injustices for individuals and at policy level.

Law Centres do this every day, helping local people access justice and get redress.

LCN’s response is threefold: working to strengthen and extend Law Centre services; working to strengthen and extend the network of Law Centres; and nationally, raising the collective voice of Law Centres for their communities.

Personally, I was honoured to represent Law Centres over the last two years on the Bach Commission on Access to Justice, established to develop realistic but radical proposals with cross-party appeal for re-establishing access to justice as a fundamental public entitlement, equivalent to education or healthcare.

The commission found that the justice system is in such a crisis that there is a need for a new legally enforceable right to justice, guaranteed by a new Right to Justice Act. The Act would codify and supplement existing rights, adding a new right for individuals to receive reasonable legal assistance. A new independent body would promote, develop and enforce it.

The report before you summarises our work to this end and its effects. It covers the year between
The time when Lisa helped little Owen take on Network Rail

Solicitor Lisa Haythorne (L) of Derbyshire Law Centre helped mum Tara and her severely disabled son Owen challenge Network Rail. Owen has to get regular medical care, but could not take the train to the hospital because his local station at Alfreton is not wheelchair accessible.

Lisa was able to take on the case with support from national watchdog the Equality and Human Rights Commission (EHRC) as part of a successful pilot for funding disability discrimination cases. They were so happy with the case that they even made a short film about it.

When EHRC considered how to follow up the pilot, we as Law Centres’ national body asked specialists like Lisa and presented clear collective priorities. EHRC has listened and this will result in more support for discrimination casework. We think it is really important: people’s rights are only as strong as their ability to get redress when they are breached!

our AGMs, taking us from our memorable Belfast conference last November to Glasgow, where we come together this autumn.

Finally, I sincerely thank Cheryl Weston, long-standing manager of Nottingham Law Centre, who stood down as LCN chair at AGM 2016, and trustees standing down at AGM 2017: Pamela Fitzpatrick (chair), Michael Tarnoky and Patrick Marples (vice-chair). Thanks also to all our Executive Committee members for the time, ideas, energy and support. Importantly, my heartfelt thanks to the LCN staff and team of consultants for their constant hard work, dedication and good humour.

I particularly wish to thank our funders, donors and supporters. It is through their support that we have been able to achieve the impact reported on here.

In 2018, LCN will turn forty. In our 40th year, we will campaign for the right to justice, we will continue to support Law Centres to challenge injustice, and as a network, we will strive to do justice.

‘In our experience, nonprofits that are part of a network can leverage resources and knowledge to build capacity more effectively than nonprofits that ‘go it alone’. The relationships within a network accelerate growth of individual members’ capacity and enhance collective impact of a network, which can result in a more sustainable and effective nonprofit organisations, and healthier more vibrant communities.’

How we help: Keeping Law Centres resilient and effective through changing circumstances

Four and a half years after the cuts to civil legal aid, resourcing pressures on Law Centres remain unrelenting. Government has repeatedly delayed its review of legal aid.

Local authorities have less and less funds with which to support local legal advice. Austerity policies continue unabated and drive up demand for legal assistance. Most recently, the UK’s decision to leave the European Union is challenging on two fronts: driving EEA nationals in the UK to clarify their status and rights, while making prospective EU funding for civil society organisations uncertain.

LCN takes a three-pronged approach to supporting Law Centres through this uncertain landscape. Our primary focus has been on helping Law Centres to maximise their resources, in a variety of ways. Along with this, we have sought to maintain and share specialist knowledge across the network. Finally, LCN has a distinct role to play in supporting Law Centres to avoid crisis and to persevere through it.

Maximising Law Centres’ resources starts with helping them increase their income, primarily through fundraising. Over the past financial year we assisted Law Centres to apply for grants from charitable foundations of nearly £3m, of which nearly £1.25m was secured by the end of that year and around £475,000 was awaiting decision. Alongside this, LCN continues to help Law Centres access EU funding, for which we are still eligible until at least the end of the current EU budget cycle. Over the past year, this has involved Law Centres and 6 non-Law Centre partners in three applications for a total of 1.1m Euros, of which 350,000 Euros has been secured and 450,000 Euros still awaits decision.

Improving practice-related income is just as important, and LCN continued to support 12 Law Centres to optimise the management of their legal aid contracts and billing for their publicly funded work. In response to the tender for the next civil legal aid contracts, we are also running member workshops on bidding, and as before will also advise on individual bids. While over half of Law Centres had started to charge fees for some services no longer covered by legal aid, by last year many of them have given this up. We are in the process of collecting and reassessing learnings from this experience, as we have done in 2014. Once we have analysed how fee-charging schemes can reliably generate unrestricted income for agencies, we will share this not just with Law Centres but with the wider sector as well.

Along with increasing income, we are helping Law Centres reduce spending, primarily by facilitating bulk purchase schemes to save members vital funds. This year we have extended our scheme providing Law Centres with LexisNexis online legal resources, and it is now integral to our membership offering. We have also made considerable progress this year on negotiating a national professional indemnity insurance policy for all Law Centres. With the pro bono help of law firm Akin Gump, we have analysed five years of claims history for each member and determined the extent of cover that is actually required. We anticipate that this policy will commence in the coming year.

Our comprehensive take on resourcing has LCN working to increase Law Centre capacity as well. The Law Centres 2020 Digital Vision project that LCN leads aims to upgrade Law Centres’ ICT infrastructure, including software, hardware and communications. This year we have helped an early adopter cohort of nine sites and 175 users onto better broadband setup, new hardware and the cloud-based Office 365 suite. We have also set up a national IT helpdesk and progressed on the development of a national Law Centre client management system. On legal services, we have also been working on expanding
Law Centres’ pro bono tie-ins. In the past year our focus has been on university law schools and their clinical programmes, with three new schemes set up with Law Centres, along with closer collaboration with regional law societies.

As organisations that trade on their specialism, Law Centres prize knowledge development and sharing, counting training among their top three services in our member survey. LCN caters for this need with a diverse learning programme: in the past year 281 staff members from 82% of Law Centres have taken part in ten full day courses, seven half-day courses and 13 shorter workshops. Nearly all (97%) participants see these sessions as good or excellent, crediting their specificity to Law Centres, the quality of delivery and the learning outcomes, which increase their confidence markedly.

Lastly, LCN directly assists Law Centres in avoiding crisis, extending governance, management, planning, development and financial support where a member needs them. In the past year 25 Law Centres have taken advantage of this bespoke support, and 92% of them credit us with putting them on a stronger footing as a result.

Only recently retired from another Law Centre, Wendy rushed to help North Kensington Law Centre – and took this photo as she was approaching the site.

‘We have had more help and useful assistance from LCN than any other network we have belonged to. We feel we can share the load and so focus more on our clients.’ Law Centre manager

The day when Grenfell Tower burned down – and what followed

The Grenfell Tower disaster and its chaotic aftermath posed a big challenge to North Kensington Law Centre. Initially locked out of their offices, literally next door to the tower, they prepared for a sharp rise in urgent need from traumatised survivors.

The Law Centre was clear about what it needed to do — and about its support needs from LCN. We helped match the Law Centre with pro bono support from City law firms. These secondees help the Law Centre better manage and take up the many offers of legal and non-legal volunteering it has had — not least from other Law Centres.

LCN also arranged for donations of laptops and other equipment, for the Law Centre to be able to work more flexibly. We also helped field media enquiries that were obstructing the Law Centre’s work until a dedicated spokesman was in place. Now the Law Centre is helping over a hundred Grenfell survivors, and we remain in awe of their vital work.
The year when Haringey Law Centre came back fighting

Just when it was due to celebrate its fortieth anniversary, Haringey Law Centre suffered a loss of funding from several sources that has put it at risk. With the help of a dedicated grant, LCN was able to place an experienced development worker part-time at the Law Centre. Miranda’s challenge was to generate new opportunities for the Law Centre and develop its stakeholder relations.

She hit the ground running and met with a range of local agencies, the borough’s MPs, funders and law firms. Within several months the Law Centre had new pro bono advice services to augment its in-house work, which was also supported by new grants. Several new initiatives, such as pop-up advice sessions and community education sessions, focus on the borough’s most deprived ward, Northumberland Park.

Miranda’s work has helped the Law Centre turn a corner, reach new groups and strengthen its local profile. We call that time well spent!

Solicitor Diane from Hackney Community Law Centre volunteered her time to train support workers in Haringey’s Northumberland Park ward on Universal Credit.

Miranda (L) helps volunteers prepare for their first tribunal hearings appealing PIP disability benefit decisions.
How we help:
Maintaining a well-governed, sustainable and effective national organisation that promotes member collaboration

Each Law Centre faces its own set of challenges, deriving from the local nature of its work: local population, needs, available services. Yet these challenges are also typical to Law Centres, and peer support can provide a wealth of assistance when members are helped to share.

Some challenges are best tackled collaboratively, involving Law Centres and partners from across a region or the country. Fostering this cohesion across the network and encouraging collaboration are integral to the way LCN works.

Examples of how LCN facilitates collaboration can be seen in our themed strategic projects. These joint initiatives often start out as issues raised by Law Centres, that they would like to address but cannot, or would rather not, do so on their own. One such regional initiative has been our South West Law Centres Project, helping three Law Centres — Avon and Bristol, Gloucester and Wiltshire — set up a Community Interest Company (CIC). The CIC, wholly owned by these Law Centres, a vehicle for earning sustainable income through fees, and for extending Law Centres’ services beyond the little that legal aid covers. Learnings from this project also inform our analysis of fee-charging schemes, mentioned earlier.

Recently, our most prominent strategic project has been Living Rights. It had started in late 2015 as an initiative to inform EU citizens in the UK in order to counter work exploitation and exclusion from services. In light of the Referendum, Living Rights expanded considerably, operating a nationwide network of ten Law Centres and partners delivering outreach work and public education events. We organised two national conferences as part of the project, which were described as ‘fantastic’ and with ‘relevant and engaging’ speakers, with almost all (96%) delegates leaving more confident in their understanding of the challenges and support for EEA nationals. This was backed up by online resources on anything from Brexit itself to housing, healthcare and education, available in eight European languages. Views and downloads of these briefings have increased by 70% over the past year, bolstered by face-to-face and social media engagement. As the project concludes, we are looking to build on the insights and connections it has generated, and these would likely feature in next year’s report.

Strategic joint projects like Living Rights are important drivers for improving data collection from Law Centres, the better to understand and communicate our work and its impact. Leading by example, LCN has significantly enhanced its capacity with a SalesForce database. We have devoted great effort to developing the database and integrating it with existing resources like our website, and are already seeing the benefits. Similarly, we are working with Law Centres to identify and agree a national data set that will be harmonised to better aggregate information. Beyond this, we are also exploring the development of a national client management system for Law Centres, that would meet their complex needs across the full range of their work. To this end we have been reviewing a wide variety of software and negotiating with legal software developers, and this work is ongoing.

In the meantime, our data and knowledge sharing across the network carries on, and we put a premium on a multiplicity of channels to suit various needs. Our weekly e-Bulletin shares news and updates at the widest circulation. Our themed email discussion lists connect professionals by specialism and help us respond to their requests. Our website’s Learning Hub offers off-the-shelf resources across Law Centres’ areas of practice. Still, there is nothing like gathering Law Centres together in person to foster our team spirit.
The times when we spoke out for supporting migrants – in the UK and in Brussels

The Living Rights project has been as successful as it was timely. With our local delivery partners, LCN held a succession of local public events, bringing together European citizens with lawyers, campaigners, community leaders and mayors to talk about their needs in light of Brexit.

These, along with other Living Rights work, have given us valuable understanding of the legal needs of EEA nationals in the UK, as well as of what works better in reaching and supporting them. We were never going to keep that knowledge to ourselves.

In the UK, we have been sharing our learnings with funders, public agencies and support organisations through closed discussions as well as two day-long national conferences. Project officer Laura (pictured at London City Hall meeting) has also travelled to Brussels to take our concerns and insights to the European Commission and other stakeholders there. These also inform our planning for other upcoming services as Brexit draws nearer.
The time when defending human rights in Budapest did not look so far away

LCN works to strengthen relations between Law Centres and other agencies, to widen our circles of learning and to develop the wider movement for social justice. More and more of our internal events and training take in delegates from other organisations. Even our annual conference — a focal event in our calendar — is now open for ‘fellow travellers’ to take part.

This is also reflected in the content, with recent conferences taking in more comparative perspectives from other jurisdictions, as so many of the issues we face are global: from threats to access to justice and human rights, through austerity and systemic inequalities, to the diminishing space for civil society. Last year alone, we heard from colleagues from Scotland, Northern Ireland, the Republic of Ireland, Hungary and Australia. How will we grow this movement next?

Last year we held eight regional forums across the country, attended by nearly all (98%) members. We also held a national general meeting in London in the spring, and took our annual conference to Belfast for the first time. This well-attended event heard from illustrious speakers including Northern Ireland’s justice minister and chief human rights commissioner, the president of the immigration upper tribunal and the director of charity Liberty.

One hardy perennial in our conferences, regional forums and internal communications is regulatory developments. Law Centres are subject to seven separate regulatory frameworks, and most are under constant review. To take a load off Law Centres, LCN engages with the regulators and keeps members abreast of changes. This year we negotiated with regulators on interpreting rules that apply to Law Centres, including the potential for more flexible terms for professional indemnity insurance (mentioned above). Other updates on recent changes to solicitors’ competence assessment and training needs help inform Law Centre trustees and empower them to better perform their charity governance roles.

LCN’s work complements and extends the scope of individual Law Centres. The leadership and facilitation that we provide help Law Centres to assist one another, to address challenges collectively and to strategically develop our shared capacity. It is, in short, our network in action.
How we help:  
Profiling Law Centres as specialist rights-based organisations challenging injustice and poverty

Much of our work in support of Law Centres is low key and undertaken largely behind the scenes. Probably the most public aspect of LCN’s work is in promoting Law Centres and serving as their national collective voice. It has been a busy year on this front but our hard work has been paying off.

To promote equitable access to justice and challenge the legal aid cuts we have made several policy contributions. In our ongoing contact with the Ministry of Justice, we bring Law Centres’ experience to bear with ministers and civil servants. In January, this took on added purpose when the government announced its plans for an extensive review of the Legal Aid Sentencing and Punishment of Offenders (LASPO) Act 2012. Despite a setback due to the snap general election we have kept up our preparations. Anticipating the review’s relaunch, in August we joined forces with a host of civil society organisation, drafting a detailed memorandum to Parliament’s Justice Committee. This sets out our concerns and proposals for framing the legal aid review, and we look forward to following it up in the coming months now that the review has finally been launched.

LCN wants to influence improvements to access to justice and will do so with any and all parties seriously engaging in this. Our director, Julie, has served on the Bach Commission, tasked to outline the crisis in our justice system as well as proposals for its sustainable future. As legal aid providers, we see the current system’s deficiencies and demand evidence-based change of policymakers. As community organisations, we see the terrible impact of the lack of timely legal advice on individuals and families.

The Commission’s final report, *The Right to Justice* (September 2017), echoes many of the arguments and suggestions we made in our evidence. This is gaining further political traction, as shadow justice secretary Richard Burgon MP has indicated that the report would shape Labour’s next manifesto.

As with other areas of LCN’s work, on public policy too we strive to anticipate prospective challenges and engage with them proactively. One area of concern is the court reform programme, to which the government has committed over £1bn. The programme’s thrust is transferring many interactions with the justice system, including hearings, onto digital channels and changing the way the system uses judges and expert panel members. We are concerned that this might affect people’s prospects, represented or not, in court or tribunal. Therefore, we are engaging with HMCTS to keep track of research and experimentation that shapes future formats, and inform them where we can.

Another ongoing concern for Law Centres has been the prospect of Brexit. Our Living Rights project (above) has helped us to a deeper understanding of the knowledge gaps and support needs that this profound shift is creating, and we seek to communicate these widely. In the aftermath of the referendum, we have also spoken out about the worrying rise of hostility and hate crime toward our members, clients and communities and the threat that this poses to the rule of law.

More broadly, we are concerned with the effect of Brexit on the framework of people’s rights in the UK, and are co-ordinating our position with other organisations through the Human Rights Alliance. LCN also seeks to inform policy indirectly, contributing from Law Centres’ experience to research reports that capture the positive impact of legal assistance. One such report was Amnesty UK’s *Cuts That Hurt: the Impact of Legal Aid Cuts in England on Access to Justice*, an acute record of the hardship caused by the cuts. Another report,
The night when Sue won the Outstanding Achievement Award

There are not many people who can lead a Law Centre on their day job — as well as two duty solicitor schemes at court — and then set up another Law Centre in their spare time. Then again, there are not many lawyers like solicitor Sue James, of Hammersmith and Fulham Law Centre.

Having worked in legal aid for nearly three decades, Sue is not just a leader locally and among her peers. Recently, she has been writing about her experience in online magazines and in the Guardian, because she wants everyone ‘to see what we see’.

We think it is important to celebrate Law Centre successes and excellence. LCN encourages Law Centres to promote their good work helps them get nominated to for awards and prizes that recognise it.

Lady Hale, new president of the Supreme Court, was happy to endorse Sue’s nomination for Legal Aid Lawyer of the Year. In July Sue collected her award, telling a packed hall, ‘Law Centres just do things differently. I love that we get to go from the food bank to the Supreme Court!’

The Centre for Justice Innovation’s Point Me in the Right Direction: Making Advice Work for Former Prisoners, showcases the fundamental importance of social welfare legal advice to rehabilitation efforts, in particular the multidisciplinary approach taken by Law Centres. A third report, Meeting the Challenge: Voluntary Sector Services for Destitute Migrant Children by the Centre on Migration Policy and Society (COMPAS), highlights the importance — and scarcity — of qualified, regulated immigration advice that is key to families accessing public support.

Just as important as influencing decision makers is our communications work to engage the public with Law Centres, their work and access to justice more generally. The past year has seen LCN make 26 media appearances, on top of 83 media appearances by individual Law Centres, many of them made with LCN’s support. This is supplemented by a sustained increase in our social media reach across Twitter (+17%), Facebook (+45%) and LinkedIn (+65%). Our social media presence remains a major conduit of visitors onto our website, helping it outperform comparable organisations in two main UK sector benchmarks. Our newest channel, a monthly supporters e-newsletter, has seen similar audience growth and its open rate, well above industry benchmark, suggests that it is well received.

Our profile raising and advocacy work help us punch well above our weight, given the size of LCN, the network as a whole and our resources. It also demonstrates the distinct role that LCN has to play and the value it adds to Law Centres’ work.
How we have made a difference

- Attracted over £31,488 in gifts-in-kind support from law firms, on top of cash funds
- Supported 12 Law Centres to improve management of their legal aid contracts
- 3,500 people engaged nationwide through Living Rights project events
- Helped Law Centres apply for nearly £3,000,000 in grant funding
- 281 Law Centre staff members skilled up through 30 training sessions

Law Centres Network Annual Review 2016/17
Over 150,000 people reached monthly on social media (average)

Convened 8 regional and 2 national Law Centres forums

Upgraded ICT infrastructure for a first cohort of 175 staff across 9 sites

109 media appearances last year, of which 26 by LCN
Is there a better way? What are we missing? Should we try something else? These questions led us last December to commission an independent evaluation of our work and its impact. The external evaluator sought oral and written feedback from a good range of our internal and external stakeholders and produced a detailed, helpful report.

Our internal stakeholders — member Law Centres — have had strongly positive feedback for us across the work that we do. They reported a clear sense that LCN, as their representative body, was valued and respected. They praised our horizon-scanning work, as well as the inspiration and encouragement that they saw us providing, which they recognised as strengthening the network.

Our external stakeholders — a mix of funders, partners and fellow travellers — also report seeing the positive impact of LCN’s work in recent years. Even our more inwards-facing work, such as member training and fundraising support, was noted externally as successful. Our profile-raising work was praised for sustaining a strong and credible voice on public policy matters, making ‘robust’ and ‘thoughtful’ representations on behalf of Law Centres and punching above our weight.

External stakeholders also appreciated our faithfulness to the core values of the Law Centres movement, such as emphasising Law Centres’ resilience and adding value to their work by turning public attention to it and the problems it addresses. In particular, external stakeholders have praised our concern that Law Centres’ clients remain a top priority in how we shape our services and that their voices are heard.

Pleasing as this positive feedback is, we are determined to learn from it and improve on it. We have taken the findings and recommendations as instructive and used them to reassess our approach and revise our strategic plan.

As a consequence, you can expect that in the coming years LCN will
- Remain client-centred at all levels of strategising and delivery
- Continue to foreground members, clients and communities in our policy and advocacy work
- Build on our successful record of enabling and developing our members’ services
- Incorporate more flexibility and pragmatism into our strategy, to be more responsive
1. Loving Law Centres: Matthew Smerdon, CEO of the Legal Education Foundation, congratulates Sue Bent of Central England Law Centre on their fortieth anniversary.

2. Loving Law Centres: in February, actor Maxine Peake and barrister Michael Mansfield QC came to celebrate Greater Manchester Law Centre’s official launch.

3. Loving Law Centres: this summer, Hackney mayor Philip Glanville, a great supporter of his local Community Law Centre, came in to hear more about their current work.

— Ensure the resilience of LCN and its long-term sustainability as a resource for Law Centres
— Deploy our resources in a more focused way, rather than trying to do too much
— Better distinguish LCN’s role and impact from those of Law Centres
— Strengthen our communications to present a clear, compelling narrative of LCN

Of course, this evaluation is but one step in our ongoing process of reflecting about our mission and strategy. The coming year in particular will give cause for reflection as 2018 will see LCN’s fortieth anniversary – a long way since the establishment of the Law Centres Working Group (as it was then), which initially served only a handful of Law Centres, the oldest of which were set up only several years prior.

Not that there would be much time to ponder. The next civil legal aid contracts will be awarded and commence, and we worry that the housing duty desk scheme would painfully adjust to drastic consolidation and competitively low fees. Austerity policies will continue, driving increased need for Law Centre services but squeezing local authorities’ ability to support local legal advice. The shape of the UK’s separation from the European Union would also be agreed, and current indications raise our concern that people’s rights would be weakened as a result.

Without LCN, each Law Centre would be left to meet these challenges on its own. As Law Centres’ dedicated support body, LCN is the only organisation that supports them to be just what they are: specialist legal practices targeting social injustices. These injustices are often systemic, so we can only hope to overcome them by working together – as a network of Law Centres that is at the centre of a wider movement for social change.
Statement of financial activities
As at 31 March 2017

These summarised financial statements contain information from both the Statement of Financial Activities and the Balance Sheet for the year ended 31 March 2017, but are not the full statutory report and accounts.

The summary financial information shows the income raised for our activities was £503,424 the cost of raising the income and the amounts spent on our charitable activity was £622,345. The information is taken from the full financial statements which were approved by the trustees on 9 October 2017.

In order to gain a full understanding of the financial affairs of the charity, the full audited financial statements, trustees’ annual report and auditors’ report should be consulted. Copies can be obtained from the Law Centres Network or on the Charity Commission website.

Signed on behalf of the trustees,

Nick Whittingham
Treasurer
9 October 2017

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<td>Total funds</td>
<td>270,947</td>
<td>389,868</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

18.5% of our income was ringfenced for upgrading Law Centres’ ICT infrastructure

5.1% of our income came in the form of gifts in kind

15.6% of our income was from Law Centres’ membership fees

We spent only 3% on premises, leaving more for services to members
### Income

**As at 31 March 2017**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Source of Income</th>
<th>2017 (£)</th>
<th>2016 (£)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>IT National Project (TLEF)</td>
<td>93,000</td>
<td>21,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Subscriptions from Law Centre members</td>
<td>78,540</td>
<td>75,900</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SOBeL / London Councils</td>
<td>56,487</td>
<td>56,487</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Future Advice Fund</td>
<td>50,000</td>
<td>50,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Small Grants and Donations</td>
<td>43,812</td>
<td>2,525</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Developing New Models - Trust for London</td>
<td>39,000</td>
<td>18,750</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gifts in Kind</td>
<td>31,488</td>
<td>31,459</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Law Centre Training</td>
<td>28,982</td>
<td>26,531</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other income</td>
<td>26,388</td>
<td>27,595</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Contract Services</td>
<td>25,708</td>
<td>66,686</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Access to Justice Foundation</td>
<td>15,000</td>
<td>10,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>London Legal Support Trust</td>
<td>10,000</td>
<td>20,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Annual conference</td>
<td>4,845</td>
<td>2,554</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Living Rights Project (European Commission)</td>
<td>—</td>
<td>255,449</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Principles to Practice</td>
<td>—</td>
<td>72,780</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td>503,250</td>
<td>739,454</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Expenditure

**As at 31 March 2017**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Type of Expenditure</th>
<th>2017 (£)</th>
<th>2016 (£)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Staff costs</td>
<td>286,116</td>
<td>297,808</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Legal and Professional Fees (Projects)</td>
<td>147,348</td>
<td>118,425</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Grants &amp; Payments to Law Centres</td>
<td>41,510</td>
<td>79,441</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gifts in kind</td>
<td>31,488</td>
<td>31,459</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other (Project Specific costs)</td>
<td>23,693</td>
<td>8,946</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Office: ICT, Insurance and Communications</td>
<td>21,532</td>
<td>18,947</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Premises costs</td>
<td>18,734</td>
<td>18,278</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Governance costs*</td>
<td>17,827</td>
<td>14,620</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Annual Conference &amp; Events</td>
<td>13,645</td>
<td>7,666</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Publication design and print</td>
<td>8,591</td>
<td>14,514</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Training and Course Costs</td>
<td>5,311</td>
<td>4,612</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bad debts expense</td>
<td>3,942</td>
<td>2,907</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Subscriptions and Journals</td>
<td>2,608</td>
<td>3,647</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td>622,345</td>
<td>615,456</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Analysis of governance costs*

- Audit: 10,216
- Governance meetings: 5,236
- EC travel (reimbursed): 1,844
- Trustee liability insurance: 532
- **Total governance costs**: 17,827
Law Centres as Agents of Change
How it all works together: our theory of change for Law Centres and LCN

**Context and Assumptions**

Law Centres operate in a society which is unequal.

We make a distinctive contribution to the fight for social justice by combining the power of the human relationship at the heart of the lawyer – client collaboration with the motivation to use the law for doing good.

This creates a powerful framework that harnesses the law as a tool for change.

**Activities and approach taken by individual Law Centres**

- **Law Centres embedded in communities:**
  - Work in solidarity with people who are socially excluded, and multiply disadvantaged;
  - Contribute legal expertise to partnerships with other organisations;
  - Operate services that reach those most in need.

- **Building rights awareness and legal capability**

- **Providing targeted and preventative advice and representation**

- **Using the law to arrest crisis**

- **Speaking up and making voices heard**

- **Pursuing strategic litigation**

**Outcome**

- People are more confident, manage problems better, have more agency and control, participate more fully and equally in society, and are ready for opportunity.

- Public authorities are more effective and are able to shift resources away from managing crisis.

- More people fulfil their potential.

**Methodology**

- Identify needs and root causes
- Identify the role of the Law Centre in meeting these needs
- Identify the other agencies you need to work alongside
- Engage local communities to design services together
- Work in ways that nourish confidence and self-belief
- Evaluate impact and share learning
- Be driven by evidence
Outcome

A society that recognises fair treatment of all is essential with government and institutions accountable to a wider range of people.

Resources distributed more fairly.

Law made in the interests of social justice.

Methodology

- Analyse needs and root causes
- Identify what worked, share learning and support take up by Law Centres
- Engage Law Centres to design strategic national responses
- Build coalitions and reach wide audiences
- Exert influence
- Evaluate impact and share learning
- Be driven by evidence
Thank you!

**Funders and supporters**

AB Charitable Trust  
The Access to Justice Foundation  
Akin Gump Strauss Hauer & Feld LLP  
Allen & Overy LLP  
Ashurst LLP  
AspiraCloud Ltd  
The Baring Foundation  
City Bridge Trust  
European Commission – Rights Equality and Citizenship Programme  
Freshfields Bruckhaus Deringer LLP  
Future Advice Fund  
Herbert Smith Freehills LLP  
JP Getty Jr Charitable Trust  
KCS Ltd  
The Legal Education Foundation  
LexisNexis  
London Councils  
London Legal Support Trust  
Trust for London  

**Staff team**

Nimrod Ben-Cnaan Head of Policy and Profile  
Julie Bishop Director  
Alex Charles Finance and ICT Officer  
Laura Chilintan Project Officer  
Cathy Gallagher Solicitor Regulation and Pro Bono Development  
Helen Gazzi Innovation Lead  
Miranda Grell Development Office (on secondment)  
Vicki Leaver Office Manager  
Stella Russell Development Consultant  

**Trustees**

Pamela Fitzpatrick Harrow Law Centre (chair)  
Ruth Hayes Islington Law Centre (vice-chair)  
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Patrick Marples South West London Law Centres  
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