



Annual Review

2018-2019

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Law for Life online:



www.advicenow.org.uk
www.lawforlife.org.uk



twitter.com/LfL_Advicenow



www.facebook.com/advicenowlfl

Welcome from the chair

As the need for legal help grows and the funding for that help diminishes, we have focused our efforts this year on meeting the needs of the most vulnerable, and on doing so in partnership with others both nationally and locally. Our integrated approach to providing help combines specially developed resources on our website, Advicenow, with training resources for trusted intermediaries in the community to enable them to recognise problems, and have the skills and confidence to know where to find solutions. We would love to do much more of this as we recognise that even though the numbers trained are relatively small it has a powerful multiplier effect in their communities. And confidence builds confidence.

[Read more from our chair](#)



Amanda Finlay, Chair

The changing environment for our work

Looking back over the year, public funding for legal assistance has continued to decline, as have the number of providers serving people in a number of core areas of law, on which many of the most disadvantaged members of society rely. This year saw the conclusion of the LASPO 2012 post implementation review; the overwhelming focus has been the impact of changes to scope and eligibility for legal aid, and the loss of suppliers across the country. For example, legally aided housing matter starts declined by a shocking 68% between 2011 and 2018 with all the attendant misery of rising homelessness.

[Read more from our CEO](#)



Lisa Wintersteiger, CEO

Who we are and why we are here

Law for Life strives for social justice by legally empowering individuals and communities. We believe everyone should be equipped with the knowledge, confidence and skills needed to deal with the law-related issues they are likely to encounter in the course of their lives.

- We specialise in targeted and tailored public legal education that is user centred, empowering and preventative.
- We deliver award-winning access to justice assistance that brings together on and offline help.¹
- We combine research and practice to achieve excellence in public legal education and information. We promote the importance of high quality public legal education and information (PLEI) in order to develop and share good practice.



“At the risk of making a huge generalisation, information about the law and legal rights is notoriously inaccessible. The language of lawyers and the law is all too often opaque. It shouldn’t be that way. Advicenow plays a vital role in cutting through the nonsense and telling you what you need to know. All power to them.”

Jon Robins, The Guardian



¹ Advicenow has received Plain English Campaign awards on three separate occasions and is the 2017 Legal Aid Lawyer of the Year winner for Access to Justice through IT.

Making a difference

Making a difference for Litigants in Person

Increasing numbers of people find themselves facing going to court or tribunal without the help of a lawyer (Litigants in Person). This year, 76% of our survey respondents identified as actual or potential Litigants in Person. We work hard to meet their needs through our partnership with RCJ Citizens Advice, Support Through Court based in courts around the country, and LawWorks clinics.

We updated and improved our existing guides, and began work on a new guide and tool to help challenge Employment Support Allowance and Universal Credit decisions, and a new film to help people apply for a non-molestation and occupation order, both of which will be published in the coming year.

We have increased our efforts to make the case that Litigants in Person urgently need to be better catered for, particularly in the development of the online court. We have provided feedback on the family online digital reform so far, identifying improvements needed. We have shared user insight with HMCTS, we are involved in the Solicitor general's PLE working group, and have contributed to the [LASPO review](#), [Justice Select Committee](#), [Justice](#), and the [Litigant in Person Engagement Group](#).



The Litigant in Person Support Strategy

“I’m new in the country and facing Domestic violence from my husband. No money to pay to lawyers, no family around. All information I’ve got from Advicenow let me feel strong again.”

Advicenow user

“Your site is brilliant. It’s helpful to see all the help resources in one place and written in such plain language. I have even recommended it to my ex-wife.”

Advicenow user

“Thank you for a very thorough guide. It is incredibly daunting and stressful to have to request a DWP reconsideration, especially as I am unwell and do not have any assistance. Your guide has been an essential resource and has helped me manage my anxiety.”

Advicenow user

“Full, in detail and comprehensive guide that clearly depicts each step of the way and where to find support and links for each section. Cannot recommend enough. Thank you so much!”

Advicenow user



Making a difference for people facing housing problems

In a population-wide study exploring people's understanding of the rental sector, 47% of respondents described their housing problems as "bad luck", only 11% understood that their problem had a legal dimension and 60% of people did not know that solicitors can help with eviction.² This knowledge gap is particularly worrying since many people are unaware they may be able to gain redress or apply for legal aid. There has been a disastrous decline in the overall provision of housing related legal aid cases. Between 2011 and 2018 matter starts in legally aided housing cases reduced by 68%, with 73% of people with rented housing problems handling them alone without any form of legal advice or support.³

Limited legal knowledge was particularly associated with those without educational qualifications, young people, people in 'routine manual' professions and migrants. Against this backdrop, it is perhaps not surprising that homelessness has increased by over 160% since 2010.⁴ The recent Homelessness Prevention and Reduction Act has sought to ease some of these challenges by formally extending duties of local authorities to prevent homelessness. However, local authorities have not been equipped with the resources needed to carry out these duties and are falling short of adequately implementing the Act.⁵

Advicenow's housing guides received

77,641
pageviews
this year.

75%

of participants reported that as a result of the training they were now able to identify different sources of advice and legal help when dealing with Section 21 evictions, and said that they would be able to help private renters who have received Section 21 eviction notices.



² Pleasance et al., The Legal Problems of Renters, 2015

³ Housing and Legal Aid, House of Commons Library CDP-2018-0120

⁴ https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/764301/Statutory_Homelessness_Statistical_Release_April_-_June_2018.pdf

⁵ <https://www.local.gov.uk/about/news/lga-councils-warn-rise-temporary-accommodation-use-homelessness-reduction-act>

We have worked closely with grass-roots organisations and activists, equipping those who already work with rough sleepers or people threatened with homelessness, to improve access to housing rights and build advocacy skills so that the most vulnerable can be reached through people that they trust.

We devised and delivered a new comprehensive curriculum supporting tenants to deal with key housing issues, from disrepairs to evictions and homelessness prevention and reduction.

61 participants benefited through 5 workshops delivered in Brighton and Brixton, with at least 6 more workshops to be held in the following year. Total participants included 31 women, 10 people with disabilities, 27 people who were unemployed, out of work or retired, and 26 who classified themselves as White British.

Within this project we updated, printed and distributed copies of existing guides on *How to get repairs done at your privately rented home* and *How to deal with a section 21 eviction notice* to reflect the recent changes in the law. In the following year, we also created three new guides looking at what to do if you are threatened with or made homeless.

90%

of participants reported that that the information received would be useful to help people who are homeless or threatened with homelessness

55%

said that, as a result of the training, they would feel confident to deal directly with local authorities in relation to situations of homelessness.



Making a difference for migrants and refugees

This year we worked together with Hibiscus Initiatives to help vulnerable BME women who have been through the Criminal Justice and immigration detentions system. We delivered workshops in a resettlement hub in London and for foreign national prisoners in HMP Peterborough.

All of the individuals who attended our programme have multiple vulnerabilities (including mental health, disability, low income, long-term unemployment) and are at high risk of destitution, exploitation and hardship. Impacts included enhanced knowledge of rights, confidence and sense of empowerment.

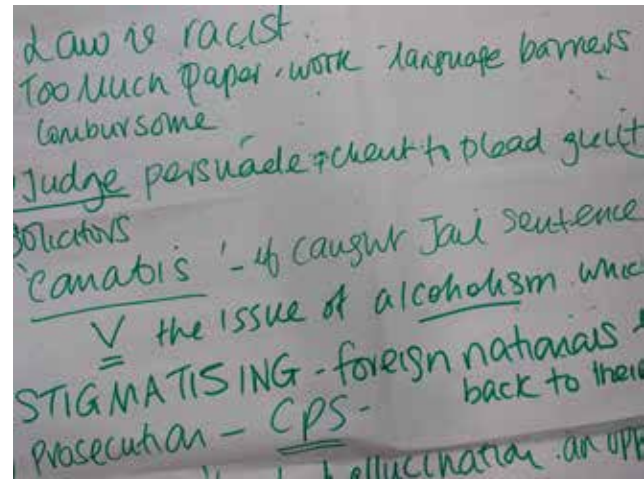
Our work with Roma families extended across three regions. Working in partnership with the [Roma Support Group](#), the [Clifton Learning Partnership](#) and the [Roma Community Care](#), we delivered a multimedia project to help Roma parents understand their rights in relation to child protection arrangements and engage with social services more effectively.

As part of this project we developed a multimedia toolkit explaining the legal framework of child protection. The toolkit consists of an [information guide](#) and a [short film](#) illustrating key elements of the legal framework and the skills needed to fully comply with the child protection requirements. The film is narrated by Roma community members in Romanes.

We also delivered three community training sessions for Roma community members: in London, Rotherham and Derby.

.....

In total,
80
individuals benefited from this programme of whom 100% are from BME background (Black African, Black Caribbean, Asian, Mixed background, Eastern European) and 100% are not in employment due to immigration restrictions, disability or ill health.



The need for this project arose from a substantial increase in numbers of Roma children in the UK care system. This is due to a range of factors including historical disadvantages and discrimination, linguistic barriers and predominantly negative experiences with public services. In addition, research shows that Roma parents going through the child protection process do not understand their legal rights. In fact, despite an increasing trend of Roma children in the care system in the UK, there were no information resources available to explain the legal framework of child protection in a way that the community could benefit from. Our consultation with Roma community members identified the need for more information about the child protection process, communicated in a culturally sensitive way, taking into account multiple disadvantages many Roma community members may face.

.....
Between 2009 and 2015, there was a **733% increase** in the number of Gypsy/Roma children living in foster care compared to a 9.17% increase for the total 'in care' population

733%

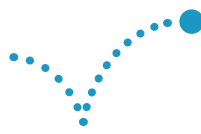
9.17%



Extending our reach



Our Advicenow service attracts 1,984,267 pageviews, a 9% increase on the previous year. This represents 1,092,518 visits by 801,948 users from England and Wales.



At the same time the bounce rate for the site was reduced by 13%, meaning that we are getting to more of the right people.

Our digital tools have this year have received 155,020 pageviews, and produced 16,825 personalised letters.



In recent evaluations 90% of training participants rated our training excellent or good and our evaluations show a consistent growth in legal capability and real world impact for our training beneficiaries.⁶

Our community education programmes focus on building the skills and confidence needed to cope with legal issues, and have been designed to ensure we reach those less able to access digital help. We reached over 30 community groups across 5 regions in the last year including migrants and refugees, faith groups, LGBT groups and housing support organisations.



We have focused particularly on the needs of people attending court without a lawyer and vulnerable groups including people with disabilities, low income households and welfare benefit claimants. 54% of Advicenow survey respondents identified as disabled, 56% of respondents have a household income of below £1,100 per month after tax and 23% identify as low-skilled workers.



Our films have been viewed 90,315 times

22% of respondents to our survey are helping someone else with a problem.

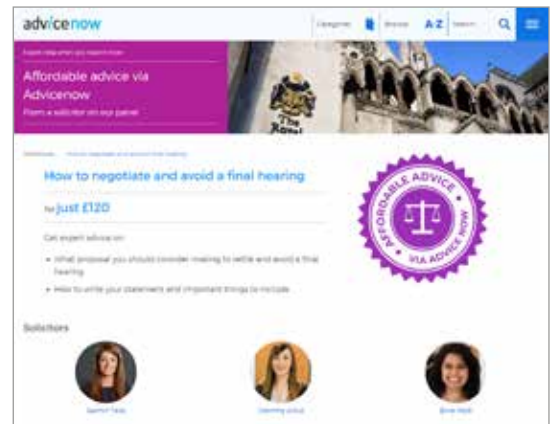


⁶ For example, we measured the following positive outcomes: 99% of participants said that our training helped them to understand basic legal issues in relation to section 21 evictions/disrepair, 87% of participants stated that they understood their legal rights and obligations in regards to section 21 evictions/disrepair as a result of our training, 82% of participants were able to identify at least two different sources of advice and legal help available after our training, 92% felt "Fairly or very confident" that they knew when they needed to get expert help to deal with a law related issue in private renting, and 66% felt "Fairly or very confident" that they would be able to negotiate with landlords to get repairs done.

Diversifying our income streams

Building on the success of phase 1 of our digital justice developments, which saw the launch of our ecommerce platform last year, we secured further funding from The Legal Education Foundation to develop and test a new potential income stream, via an exciting new project in partnership with Resolution.

The aim of the project is to provide visitors to Advicenow with access to advice from a panel of Resolution members at a fixed fee. Users will be able to move seamlessly between navigating their own way through their separation or divorce by using the guidance on Advicenow, and getting advice from a Resolution member at the points in their case when they most need it. We will establish a pricing system that enables clients to see clearly what costs they will incur up front and what advice they will receive in return. This will provide a new way of accessing unbundled help. The unique dovetailing of advice and information, and use of advance data capture systems, will also provide increased affordability for the user. Those Resolution members participating in the panel will sign up to a different way of working.



Digital pathways to affordable help

The project will allow us to provide a more holistic service to site visitors and integrate legal advice which is appropriate, timely and initiated by the user. It will provide Resolution members with new ways to meet changing client demand and access new and existing markets. It will trial and test a new model of working which responds to some of the challenges facing the family law sector. It will also enable both Law for Life and Resolution to develop and test a potential income stream as, after the pilot, solicitors will pay a fee to be included on the panel.

As part of this project, we will also deliver a chargeable interactive self-help tool, to enable LiPs to better manage their legal issues in an effective and affordable way and provide us with another income stream.

In this year we also adopted an [Ethical Trading Compass](#). This outlines the ethical principles that underpin all our trading, and the specific actions we have committed to in order to guard against these principles being compromised, now or in the future.

Supporting other organisations

We have a broad range of clients who seek our expertise through consultancy, including information gaps analyses, research and information design. Last year these included the Bar Standards Board, Tenancy Deposit Foundation, the Ministry of Justice, Tavistock and Portman NHS Trust and Warwick University.

Better informed consent

Law for Life is working with the [Gender Identity Development Service \(GIDS\)](#), based at the Tavistock and Portman NHS Foundation Trust. GIDS is an NHS specialist service for children and adolescents experiencing difficulties in their gender identity development.

The aim of the project is to better understand the legal framework underpinning informed consent amongst children and young people; to identify barriers to reaching informed consent amongst those experiencing gender dysphoria; and to understand the information needs of children and young people with gender dysphoria referred to GIDS.

As we reach the end of this first phase of the project, Law for Life will make recommendations to GIDS for improved or new information which aims to enhance the capacity of the children and young people who are referred to the GIDS service to consent to medical treatment.

Expanding our influence

Law for Life contributed to a number of policy and research initiatives. We submitted evidence to:

The LASPO 2012 Post-Implementation Review

“the pace and scale of change, alongside the pressure to deliver cost savings risk undermining the objective of improving the court system for the benefit of all citizens, and as a corollary, risk undermining access to justice and the rule of law.” [See full report](#)

The Justice Select Committee on Court reform

“Evidence from Advicenow service users reveals the difficulties that citizens experience attempting to access a system designed for lawyers, not citizens with no legal training, knowledge, or experience.” [Read full submission](#)

We also continue to contribute to the Litigant in Person Engagement group of the HMCTS Court reform programme as their ambitious plans progress. We provide support to the Solicitor Generals’ PLE committee and to the Administrative Justice Council Advice Sector Panel. This last year saw us contribute to the Legal Empowerment Impact Working Group convened by Namati.



Looking ahead

There is much more to be done. Our five years strategy builds on what we have achieved so far, as well as reflecting critically on what we could do better. Our vision for social justice and empowerment is also driven by that spirit of learning, along with a commitment to improving access to justice for our service users.

Expanding digital pathways to affordable help

We want to build on our reputation as an innovative organisation that is recognised as the place that people go to when they have a legal issue. We want to help them work through their problem, understand more about it and feel confident to begin to tackle it, and also to understand what services are available, where and at what cost. We think we are a trusted resource that can help people to navigate the legal system better, and make informed choices. This involves working with a range of expert legal service providers from which the customer can choose if they need more help, with seamless transition to affordable legal help.

Digital innovation in personalised legal tools

We think personalised tools will feature significantly in the future. Tools that help people prevent problems and empower them to sort them out when they do happen. At present around a third of people just go it alone with their legal problem, with a third more turning to family and friends. We recognise that part of the solution is to work at a community level so that people can help one another support and improve their bargaining position in common legal disputes. We will build on our community education programmes expanding delivery to three new regions. We will also expand our suite of interactive tools, connecting to the best, most accessible technology for delivering access to justice.

Research and evaluation

We have ambitious plans for building our evidence base and demonstrating what works to support our service users. We will bring together leading information providers nationally to help analyse the growing gaps in the legal information ecosystem. As Brexit looms the demand for information will grow and we aim to be future facing in the interests of our beneficiaries. We will work to identify how best to reach those for whom traditional legal services are failing. Our target audiences will include hard to reach women experiencing or at risk of domestic abuse, migrant and refugee groups with a focus on their housing and welfare needs and people living with mental or physical disability. We will also expand our capacity to evaluate the legal capability measures that our programmes address, how this interacts with digital capability and what real world benefits our approach to empowerment can garner.

In all these areas we will work with a range of partners and stakeholders to guide our thinking and ensure our research endeavours are user centred.

Over
15 million
legal issues occur in the UK every year, but fewer than
15%
of people with legal problems reach legal services.

Refugee
Mental disability
Hard to reach
Domestic abuse
HOUSING
MIGRANT
Physical disability
WELFARE

Financial Review

The Board of Trustees is pleased to present their Annual report together with the financial statements of the charity for the year ended 31st March 2019.

The financial statements comply with current statutory requirements, the Memorandum and Articles of Association, and the Statement of Recommended Practice Accounting and Reporting by Charities issued in March 2005. The Board of Trustees has complied with the Charities Act 2011 to have due regard to public benefit guidance published by the Charity Commission when reviewing the charity's aims and its objectives and in planning our future activities.

Statement of financial activities

These accounts are a summary of information extracted from the annual accounts and certain information relating to both the statement of financial activities and the balance sheet. These summarised accounts may not contain sufficient information to allow for a full understanding of the financial affairs of the charity. The independent examiner has issued an unmodified report on the full financial statements.

For further information, the full annual accounts and the directors' annual report should be consulted. Copies of these can be obtained from Law for Life, China Works, Unit 404, Black Prince Road, London SE1 7SJ

Signed on behalf of the Directors by Amanda Finlay, Chair.

Law for Life: The Foundation for Public Legal Education

Statement of Financial Activities (Incorporating an Income and Expenditure Account) for the Year Ended 31 March 2019

	Unrestricted funds 2019 £	Restricted funds 2019 £	Total funds 2019	Total funds 2018 £
INCOME AND ENDOWMENTS FROM				
Donations and legacies	945	-	945	1,881
Charitable activities	221,113	109,000	330,113	277,590
Investments	7	-	7	2
Total	222,065	109,000	331,065	279,473
EXPENDITURE ON				
Charitable activities	222,355	94,041	316,396	279,142
TOTAL EXPENDITURE	222,355	94,041	316,396	279,142
Net income before gains and losses on investments	(290)	14,959	14,669	331
Net income	(290)	14,959	14,669	331
NET MOVEMENTS IN FUNDS	(290)	14,959	14,669	331
TOTAL FUNDS AT 1 APRIL 2018	6,381	13,467	19,848	19,517
TOTAL FUNDS CARRIED AT 31 MARCH 2019	£ 6,091	£ 28,426	£ 34,517	£ 19,848

Balance Sheet At 31 March 2019

	2019 £	2018 £
FIXED ASSETS		
Tangible assets	-	308
CURRENT ASSETS		
Debtors	74,517	21,372
Cash at bank	32,523	40,769
	107,040	62,141
CREDITORS		
Amounts falling due within one year	(72,523)	(42,239)
NET CURRENT ASSETS	34,517	19,848
TOTAL ASSETS LESS CURRENT LIABILITIES	34,517	19,848
NET ASSETS	£34,517	£19,848
FUNDS		
Unrestricted funds	6,091	6,381
Restricted funds	28,426	13,467
TOTAL FUNDS	£ 34,517	£ 19,848

CONTINUING OPERATIONS

All income and expenditure has arisen from continuing activities.

Structure, governance and management

Law for Life: the Foundation for Public Legal Education is a company limited by guarantee governed by its memorandum and articles of association and registered under the number 07695486. The company was incorporated and commenced trading on 6 July 2011. It is registered as a charity with the Charity Commission under number 1143589.

The Board of Trustees

The Board of Trustees is responsible for setting strategies and policies for the charity and for ensuring that these are implemented. The members of the Board of Trustees perform the role of directors in company law and trustees in charity law. Those who served during the year were:

Amanda Finlay CBE:	27.03.2012	–	Present
Sir Robin Knowles CBE QC:	27.03.2012	–	Present
John Seargeant:	06.07.2011	–	Present
Dr. Neil Stott:	10.09.2015	–	Present
Dr. Vanessa Davies:	11.05.2017	–	Present
Dawn Oliver:	11.05.2017	–	Present
Raymond Sheehy:	11.05.2017	–	Present
Jonathan Spain:	22.02.2018	–	Present
Joseph Broadway:	22.02.2018	–	Present

Our staff

Dada Felja
Francesca Feruglio
Lisa Wintersteiger
Mary Marvel
Mihaela Rosca
Stuart Meyers
Theresa Harris
Beth Kirkland
Tin Myint

Founding Patrons

The charity is very grateful for the support it receives from its patrons listed below:

The Rt Hon. Lord Neuberger of Abbotsbury
Dame Professor Hazel Genn DBE QC

Thanks

We would like to thank everybody who supported the work of Law for Life during the year through grants and the donation of their valuable time and skills.

Pro Bono supporters and volunteers

Donna Brooks, Marek Potocki (Derby City Council)
Helen Littlewood, Sophie Wright, Martina Stipakova (Clifton Learning Partnership)
Ruth Richardson, Margita Cechova, Michal Daniel (Roma Community Care)
Gabriela Smolinska-Poffley, Mihai Calin Bica, Mania Malik (Roma Support Group)
Will Hadwen
Sabine Isaac
Melissa Markwell (Royal British Legion)
Greg Voiels (Wolverhampton Welfare Rights Service)
Katy Watts
Matt Ahluwalia (Public Law Project)
Judith Emmett
Amira Asghar
David Thomas
Lucy Grey (Allen & Overy)
Jessica Mant (Cardiff University)
Sangeeta Enright
Chris Parsons (Tower Hamlets Law Centre)
Jane Owen-Pam (Parkinson's UK)
Chris Beer (Friendly Forms)
Richard Stacey (St Paul's Advice Centre)
Shirley McDonagh,
Lizzy Nizer,
Matthew Bass, PSU Exeter
Staff at Nextlink Bristol
Alex Lowry, solicitor at RCJ Advice/FLOWS
Rita Suglani, solicitor at RCJ Advice/FLOWS
Sarah London, solicitor at RCJ Advice/FLOWS
Nina Calder, Centrepoint
Janna Watt, Crisis
Stuart Meyers
Mihaela Rosca,
Amarjit Singh
Simone Hellenen

Funding sources

The Baring Foundation
The Esmée Fairbairn Foundation
Trust for London
The Ministry of Justice
The Legal Education Foundation
TDS Charitable Foundation
John Ellerman Foundation
The Tudor Trust
Access to Justice Foundation
The Big Lottery Fund: National Lottery Awards for All
Allen & Overy Foundation
Bar Standards Board
Tavistock and Portman NHS Foundation Trust
Family Justice Council
RCJ Advice
Groundswell



ALLEN & OVERY



The Baring Foundation





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