

Annual Review

2016

6th April 2015 – 5th April 2016



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Welcome from the Chair



Over the last five years there has been increasing recognition of the importance of public legal education (PLE) as one of the pillars of access to justice, alongside legal aid, publicly supported advice and assistance and pro bono help. Public legal education aims to empower individuals and communities, increasing their confidence and capability to deal with their law-related problems. The role of family and friends as well as other trusted intermediaries in the community is seen as more and more important in helping the most vulnerable and PLE supports this interaction through training courses and web based information and tools to support individuals and those who help them.

In our fifth year of operation, we have focused on the growing need for people facing the prospect of court proceedings alone, without a lawyer, to receive the help we can offer through quality assured information, videos to build skills and confidence and tools to enable engagement. Working closely with our partners at LawWorks, Royal Courts of Justice Advice Bureau, Personal Support Unit, Bar Pro Bono Unit and the Access to Justice Foundation we are reaching many more litigants in person under the national Litigant in Person Support Strategy.

Our partners in the strategy and the Civil Justice Council, Family Justice Council and Ministry of Justice have asked us to develop web based materials that boost confidence, skills and knowledge particularly around family problems. We produced **How to apply for parental responsibility without the help of a lawyer** thanks to funding from the Ministry of Justice and **A survival guide to sorting out your finances when you get divorced** thanks to funding from the Family Justice Council.

We also contributed to Lord Justice Briggs' Review of the Civil Courts, drawing on our experience of meeting the information needs of people considering or taking court action.

We have piloted new ways of engaging with learners through our e-learning modules.

These help community groups whose users may encounter problems with benefit sanctions or want to find out what the law says and how to decide whether legal information is likely to be reliable, up to date and applicable to them. We have registered 700 learners for the modules.

In partnership with academics from University College, London we published research into legal need and the role of public legal education, highlighting the importance of building skills and confidence and reaching the most vulnerable through trusted intermediaries. We also researched gaps in information provision in the topic areas of bankruptcy and the private rented sector. With the Bar Standards Board, we provided training and resources to help them better meet the information needs of their audience, now and in the future.

As we grow our international work we have begun two multi-year projects with Open Justice Foundation Macedonia and our Erasmus Plus work with Icelandic Human Rights Centre and French NGO: AVIJED, Association pour la Vulgarisation de l'Information Juridique et l'Education au Droit.

We welcomed Dr Neil Stott to the Board. Neil brings a wealth of expertise in social enterprise. He is currently Director of the new Master of Studies in Social Innovation Programme and Executive Director of the Centre for Social Innovation at Cambridge University.

At the end of this year we said farewell to our founding Chair, Michael Smyth CBE, when he was appointed to the Legal Services Board. Michael has been a friend and supporter of PLE for many years and has been a doughty Chair in difficult times, doing much to put Law for Life on a better footing for the future. We give him our thanks and wish him well at the LSB.

As always we are indebted to the continued support of our funders, partners, clients and users.

Amanda Finlay CBE

Introduction

Who we are and why we are here

We are an independent charity that works to ensure that everyone has the knowledge, confidence and practical skills they need to secure access to justice.

We do this through community-based education and training, research and policy, and through our award-winning Advicenow website which provides easy-to-use information on rights and the law for the public.

We create effective information guides, films, and e-learning modules that provide practical help on how to manage and resolve life's everyday legal problems. We don't just tell people about the law, but show them, step by step, how they can use it and develop the skills and attitudes they need for success. We specialise in using our confidence building approach to tackle complicated subjects and processes.

“Getting legal help is not an option for me as I simply can't afford it. SO when I found this Video you made my life so much easier and I thank you for that.”

Advicenow site user

We support other organisations around the world to help their users make sense of the law through our research, consultancy, and training. We support an international network of practitioners and researchers so that we can share knowledge about how and why legal education and information for a wider public is an important part of access to justice.

“A great big thank you for your dedicated work! We are grateful for all the PLE tools and material you have generously put at our free disposal.... We truly appreciate your unique approach of addressing the needs of those who wish to convey PLE and equipping them with the necessary knowledge to be able to act more efficiently.”

AVIJED, Association Pour la Vulgarisation de l'Information Juridique et l'Education au Droit

We undertake research into the needs of litigants in person and population-wide analyses of legal capability and the implications for legal education and information services.

Our projects and services

Extending our reach

Advicenow service

The new Advicenow site went live in June 2015. We had lots of positive feedback and set up an online survey to help us understand more about the people using the site – what they think about it, how they use it, and what they feel they are able to understand or do as a result.

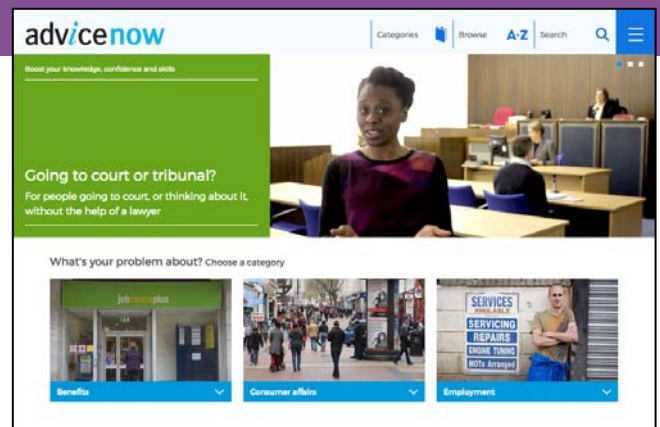
We developed a social media strategy for Advicenow, building our presence on both Facebook and Twitter to promote and disseminate our top picks and our own information. The number of referrals to Advicenow from social media has increased by nearly 170% since the same period in the previous year.

The number of people coming directly to Advicenow increased by 20% as recognition of our work grew. Similarly the percentage of returning visitors also increased – from 18.2% last year to 22.8% this year, suggesting that we are building a base of regular users.

Overall Law for Life’s Advicenow site recorded 1,182,254 sessions (individual visits to the site) by 931,528 users in 2015–16.

We were commissioned by the Civil Justice Council to review the information currently available about bankruptcy and winding up for self-employed people and those who run small businesses. As a result of this work we added a new category on business debts to our own ‘top picks’ service, to help better meet these needs.

We continued to receive feedback from large numbers of Advicenow website users. We replied to 230 requests for information and advice on a legal topic area this year.



“Thank you so much for making this stressful process so easy and accessible! I am so impressed, I was prepared for a few days of research and planning in order to start an appeal but your website and tools are so useful and efficient that after a couple of hours, I am ready to go post my letter. Thank you!!!”

“Just wanted to say thanks for forwarding through NAWRA the link to the Sanctions e-learning. Its excellent. I work in a social landlord and have suggested this should be done by all front line customer facing housing staff.”

“The information you give is simpler and less convoluted than that provided by gov.uk website. Helpful clear and concise information.”

National Litigant in Person Support Strategy

Since April 2015, Law for Life's Advicenow site has become the digital gateway to sources of assistance for litigants in person provided via the national Litigant in Person Support Strategy in partnership with the Royal Court of Justice Advice Bureau, LawWorks, the Bar Pro Bono Unit, the Personal Support Unit and the Access to Justice Foundation.

We created promotional posters and postcards to help signpost the public and intermediaries to the Going to Court gateway on Advicenow which were disseminated via the national strategy partners to advice agencies, MP's casework offices, courts and other key stakeholders. We also worked with the Family Justice Council to produce a leaflet advertising all our family resources which was distributed through the family courts. Traffic to the Going to Court page increased 161% over the previous year.



Community-based education

In partnership with the innovative East London charity, Community Links, and supported by the Big Lottery Advice Services Transition Fund, Law for Life undertook a two-year project to design and deliver a

community-based Public Legal Education programme. The programme aimed to train local volunteers and community workers to act as Community Advice Champions – non-legal experts equipped to support people in finding solutions to law-related issues. The project trained 46 community advice champions in the London Borough of Newham. The training increased their confidence and enabled them to support others in their community. 20 Community Advice Champions from our first cohort, volunteering three hours a week with Community Links, went on to support 946 people in the first year. Others provided support in trusted places in their community such as schools, churches and community groups.

“I learnt a lot including; the difference between criminal and civil cases, consumer law, consumer rights, housing law and housing rights. The training was excellent and gave me the exact information and materials to help me.”

Community Links participant

The interim evaluation report provided some initial findings which are promising and we look forward to seeing the final report which will include follow up interviews with Advice Champions, quantitative data analysis and exploration of future pathways for Advice Champions. We are hoping to extend this programme across three regions working with Locality – a UK wide network of community led organisations.

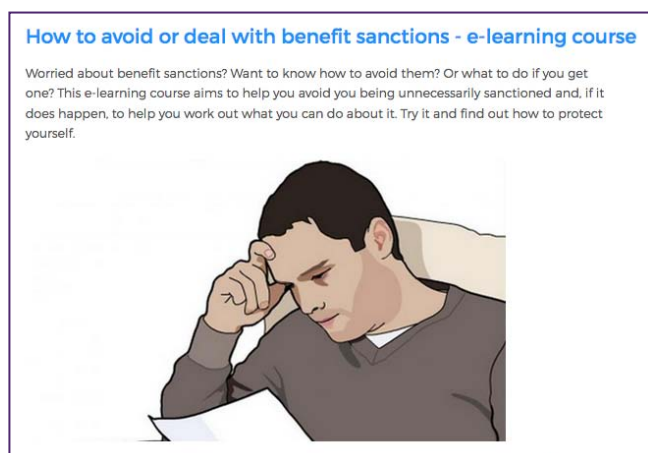
We also developed an intensive extension course for Advice Champions covering the areas of Universal Credit, financial capability and digital inclusion – in effect a holistic approach to dealing with the new Universal Credit system. It was very well received by participants, which included both Advice Champions and new volunteers.

In November 2015 we delivered a day-long session on communication skills at Community Links. Those who participated greatly valued it and it helped us think about how to incorporate more work on communication skills into our core training programme.

In June 2015, we delivered another four-week training course with Trust for London, for their grant recipients, particularly small community organisations. This training was well-received by staff and volunteers from the following London-based organisations: African Women's Care, Streatham Drop-in Centre for Asylum Seekers and Refugees, National Survivor User Network (NSUN), Forward, Disability Rights UK, Hackney Community Law Centre, Camden Federation of Private Tenants, Poverty Concern, Policy Network, Rainbow Care Community Association and Iraqi Welfare Association.

E-learning modules

We launched our second e-learning module. This 30 minute course guides users through the knowledge and skills they need to avoid being given a benefit sanction. It also looks at what to do if you have been sanctioned.



You can see this at www.advicenow.org.uk/know-hows/how-avoid-or-deal-benefit-sanctions-e-learning-course

Overall in 2015–16, 451 people completed our e-learning courses, and another 239 started the courses.

Guides

We were able to add to the number of guides on the Advicenow site and provide help with some very common but tricky family law and benefit problems. Our guides are both for people experiencing a legal problem but also for people supporting them, for example Personal Support Unit volunteers, CAB volunteers, housing support workers, advice workers and court staff as well as relatives and friends.

We produced **A survival guide to sorting out your finances when you get divorced** drawing on material provided by the Family Justice Council and funded by the Ministry of Justice. This guide aims to help people understand more about what a judge might do in a case like theirs to give them a better chance of making a fair agreement with their ex without having to go to court.



We also produced **How to apply for parental responsibility without the help of a lawyer** as part of the Litigant in Person Support Strategy thanks to funding from the Ministry of Justice. This guide is for parents or step-parents who want to know more about parental responsibility – what it is and how you get it. It explains how to make a parental responsibility agreement and how to apply for a parental responsibility order.



Expanding our influence

Civil Courts Structure Review

Law for Life was invited to respond to the Civil Courts Structure Review in order to provide insight from our understanding of how users of online legal information can be assisted with court processes from an early stage, and to ensure that those who do not or cannot use online services are not left behind. We are pleased to see many of the recommendations around the importance of public legal education have been reflected in the final report. You can see our response at www.lawforlife.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/Civil-Courts-Structure-Review-interim-report-Law-for-Life-response-February-2016-FINAL.pdf

Bar Standards Board

Following a request from the Complaints and Professional Conduct Section of the Bar Standards Board, we worked with their team to improve the information they produce for anybody wanting to or considering making a complaint about a barrister. They were keen to learn more about how to engage with the public in a language that would not be intimidating or legalistic and in a way that built trust and confidence. We carried out an information audit of their existing information on this topic looking at the key issues of audience need, purpose, content, structure, ease of navigation, presentation techniques, language and clarity, signposting, and accessibility and making specific recommendations about each. We also produced a gap analysis to help them identify where the current material was sufficient, where material could be adapted and where new material was needed. We produced an Information Design Guide, a resource that provided step-by-step guidance for those working to producing information for the department to help them meet the needs of their audience. We provided a day's

information training to 12 members of their staff. The training was very well received, as were the final versions of the new information we wrote for them. Subsequently we were also commissioned to re-write their information for the public on using a public access barrister.

Birkbeck Clinical Module



For a second year running we taught a clinical module at Birkbeck, University of London offering LLB and LLM students the opportunity to gain first-hand experience and in depth understanding of the field of public legal education and legal information provision for the public. The module aims to create and prepare a new generation of public legal education practitioners. It featured guest lectures from Professor Lois Gander, QC from the University of Alberta, a day long teacher training session, and one session learning from our Advicenow information team. Student evaluations were very positive and we hope to run the course again next year.

PLE Training Session for community sector practitioners

In February 2016 we ran a free half-day PLE training session for community organisations, hosted by Birkbeck, University of London. It was a highly successful event which gave us the opportunity to engage with 14 community groups, including Brent Advice4Renters, Brixton Advice, Age UK Bromley, Refugee Action, Toynbee Hall, Southwark Group of Tenants Organisation's Youth Forum, Noh Budget Films, Unlock, Hibiscus Initiative, IARS, PSU, Roma Support Group, Workers Educational Association, and The Field.

We shared some of our methods and approaches to teaching public legal education, particularly our emphasis on what we refer to as 'legal capability', demonstrated how these methods and approaches work in practice, and gave them some practical resources and ideas for implementing public legal education in their communities and organisations.

EU Bridging Communities

Our EU Erasmus Plus partnership brings together Law for Life, the Icelandic Human Rights Centre and French NGO AVIJED – Association pour la Vulgarisation de l'Information Juridique et l'Education au Droit.

The 'Bridge Builders' project aims to identify and train individuals to support diverse migrant groups within the partner's countries in welcoming and assisting new-comers.

The aim is to enable non-lawyers supporting migrants and newcomers to access accurate legal information and education in order to reach more new-comers that otherwise may not be assisted. We will share promising practices that can be adapted by our partners' countries, in particular the provision of housing related education and information projects.

Furthering our understanding of the need for public legal education and what works

Legal Needs, Legal Capability and the Role of Public Legal Education

Law for Life worked with researchers Pascoe Pleasence, Nigel Balmer and Catrina Denvir to analyse data from the Civil and Social Justice Panel Surveys of 2010 and 2012. We looked at what public legal education could offer in order to help people manage their legal problems. The research focused on how very few people identify legal issues and often fail to get advice. The study established that public understanding of the law is low, and that legal problems are more difficult to resolve than people expect.

Key findings:

- Half of the population experiences a civil justice issue every 36 months.
- Only 11% of people accurately recognise their problems as legal issues.
- The vast majority of people tackle their legal problems alone – only 6% use a lawyer and 4% use advice agencies.
- 25% of those with a legal problem seek help on the internet.
- People with low levels of legal capability are less likely to take action, and less able to successfully solve legal problems. They are twice as likely to experience negative consequences as a result of their legal problems, including stress-related ill-health, loss of income and family breakdown.

Key recommendations:

- Public Legal Education and Information can play an important role in diagnosing the causes of problems and improving referrals to services.
- The provision of timely Public Legal Education and Information is a vital tool in early intervention, and can prevent problems from escalating and recurring.
- Public Legal Education and Information should be embedded in lifelong learning and vocational training.

You can find more information at www.lawforlife.org.uk/research-and-theory/legal-needs-legal-capability-role-public-legal-education-summary

Assessing the information and training resource needs of tenants in the private rented sector

Commissioned by The Dispute Service Charitable Foundation (funded mainly by donations from a leading Tenancy Deposit Scheme), we were able to investigate the need for public legal education amongst private renters and assess the legal information and training resources currently available for them. Initial findings indicated that:

- Information and training resources are needed that meet the needs of the most vulnerable and least legally capable amongst tenants in the private rented sector.
- While there are many information resources available generally, they can be difficult to locate.

Wider research also shows that this need for resources occurs in a context in which only '40% of people claim to know their rights in relation to housing' and 47% of people would attribute legal issues in housing to 'bad luck' rather than recognising them as justiciable issues, while 73% of people with rented housing problems would not seek legal advice or support.

We recommended:

- producing targeted plain English resources focused on the self-management of problems, and
- consolidating the best information resources for private tenants on a specially designated web page on the Advicenow site. www.advicenow.org.uk/help-private-renters

You can find our report at www.lawforlife.org.uk/blog/assessing-the-information-and-training-resource-needs-of-tenants-in-the-private-rented-sector

We're delighted that following a further proposal, the TDS Charitable Foundation has agreed to fund us to produce some skills based, self management guides for private renters, to review and consolidate online resources for private renters and to develop training to help improve the legal capability of private renters and individuals who support private renters, such as community workers, advice workers, and community volunteers.

The challenge of teaching public legal education

As we have developed public legal education courses for individuals and for community workers we have realised what a challenge it is to explain the law from scratch to people whose main and sometimes only understanding of the law probably comes from inaccurate sources. We have had to think about how to formalise our own approach, in the hope that this would help guide our own work and that of other community organisations. Our first step has been to publish an article '**How do we teach about the law?**' by two experienced tutors, Tony Thorpe and Tara Mulqueen.

You can find the full article at www.lawforlife.org.uk/blog/how-do-we-teach-about-the-law-by-tara-mulqueen-and-tony-thorpe

“We very rarely simply tell people what the law is, nor do we rely on summary handouts. This is partly because ... much of the technical detail of the law is beyond what we are able to teach in the limited time available, but also because it is incredibly easy for such detail to overwhelm students and distract from the development of a more durable set of skills. In our approach to teaching, we actively mitigate against a false sense of security associated with ‘knowing the law’ as opposed to developing the skills necessary to find out the law and make sense of it in the context of everyday situations – particularly when the law changes so rapidly.”

From: **How do we teach about the law?**

Financial review

The Board of Trustees is pleased to present their annual review together with the financial statements of the charity for the year ended 31st March 2016.

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.

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 perform the role of directors in company law and trustees in charity law. Those who served during the year 2015–16 were:

Michael Smyth CBE QC (Hon) (Chairman)
John Ellis (Treasurer)
Margie Butler
Amanda Finlay CBE
The Hon. Mr Justice Knowles CBE
John Seargeant
Dr Neil Stott (appointed 10.09.2015)

Our staff

Rob Campbell
Theresa Harris
Mary Marvel
Tara Mulqueen
Rebecca Munro
Mihaela Rosca
Clare Shirtcliff
Lisa Wintersteiger
Janette McCulloch (Consultant)

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 2016

	Unrestricted funds £	Restricted funds £	2016 Total funds £	2015 Total funds £
INCOME AND ENDOWMENTS FROM				
Donations and legacies	3,457	–	3,457	4,259
Charitable activities				
Advancement of public legal education	168,647	86,220	254,867	275,517
Investment income	21	–	21	32
Total	172,125	86,220	258,345	279,808
EXPENDITURE ON				
Charitable activities				
Advancement of public legal education	162,739	86,185	248,924	277,314
NET INCOME	9,386	35	9,421	2,494
Transfers between funds	(5,917)	5,917	–	–
Net movement in funds	3,469	5,952	9,421	2,494
RECONCILIATION OF FUNDS				
Total funds brought forward	3,751	2,773	6,524	4,030
TOTAL FUNDS CARRIED FORWARD	7,220	8,725	15,945	6,524

Balance Sheet at 31 March 2016

	2016 £	2015 £
FIXED ASSETS		
Tangible assets	725	1,929
CURRENT ASSETS		
Debtors	40,580	26,526
Cash at bank	23,081	25,088
	63,661	51,614
CREDITORS		
Amounts falling due within one year	(48,441)	(47,019)
NET CURRENT ASSETS	15,220	4,595
TOTAL ASSETS LESS CURRENT LIABILITIES	15,945	6,524
NET ASSETS	15,945	6,524
FUNDS		
Unrestricted funds	7,220	3,751
Restricted funds	8,725	2,773
TOTAL FUNDS	15,945	6,524

CONTINUING OPERATIONS

All income and expenditure has arisen from continuing activities.

Statement by the directors of Law for Life

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, 33 Corsham Street, London, N1 6DR.

Signed on behalf of the Directors by Michael Smith, Chairman.

Thanks

We would like to take this opportunity to thank everybody who supported the work of Law for Life during 2015–2016 through grants and the donation of their valuable time.

Founding Patrons

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

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Lorna O'Reilly
Volunteers from the PSU
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Martin Tunley

Funding sources

The Baring Foundation
The Esmée Fairbairn Foundation
The Legal Education Foundation
Ministry of Justice
Bar Standards Board
Birkbeck, University of London
Trust for London
Community Links
Family Justice Council
Erasmus+
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