

Helping people overcome adversity through the Law



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'NEARLY A DECADE OF 'AUSTERITY' WHICH HAS HELPED TO INCREASE THE HARDSHIP EXPERIENCED BY CHILDREN AND FAMILIES LIVING IN THE BOROUGH AS THEY STRUGGLE THROUGH THE DAILY GRIND OF POVERTY.'

Ian Rathbone, Chair of HCLC

Chair's Report



Ian Rathbone

Since our last annual report, the political landscape has been convulsed by the destabilising impact of the 2016 Brexit referendum result and the precarious outcome of the unexpected June 2017 'snap' general election.

These seismic developments have intensified the pressures faced by residents and users of advice services, particularly EU citizens living in Hackney.

They also come against the background of nearly a decade of 'austerity' which has helped to increase the hardship experienced by children and families living in the borough as they struggle through the daily grind of poverty. They are forced to navigate the rough and dangerous seas of welfare reform and try not to sink under the threats of sanctions and ill-thought 'reforms' like Universal Credit.

A visit to our local county court provides a graphic illustration of the hardships dealt with by our excellent team of housing solicitors. Our solicitors are frequently confronted by what our senior solicitor Nathaniel Mathews has described in his blog *Frontline Hackney* as 'a blizzard of homelessness' when they turn up for their duty solicitor rota to deal with the undefended housing possession list. Unsurprisingly, hardship and desperation pervades the majority of proceedings as District Judges decide on – in Nathaniel's words – "who must stay and who must go, and who will live to fight another day".

In October 2017, the Hackney Gazette reported that there were more than 2,700 families without a permanent home in Hackney - the highest for twelve years and a visible manifestation of the escalating homelessness crisis facing Hackney and many other areas across London. Hackney Council has been doing its best to tackle this terrible crisis and fight back to build new homes for affordable renting.

Another report '*Poverty, evictions and forced moves*', published by the Joseph Rowntree Foundation in June 2017, has highlighted the sharp increase in evictions during the last twelve years. The majority of these have been 'no

fault' evictions mainly in the private sector where landlords rely on the 'section 21' evictions procedure laid down in the Housing Act 1988.

The use of the 'section 21' procedure is widespread in London and the South East where four of every five repossessions are concentrated. The Law Centre has noticed a significant increase in homelessness among many low income households in Hackney as a result of section 21.

I was very pleased when Kevin Long, one of HCLC's housing solicitors, wrote a piece for *The Guardian* on the Grenfell Tower tragedy and the role of Homes and Communities Agency (HCA). Kevin argued that, despite its official role as the UK's national housing regulator, the HCA has been all but silent on the Grenfell tragedy.

I followed it up with a letter to the press highlighting there is no real regulator of Registered Social Landlords. It's time there was one – with teeth to bite housing providers who operate below standard.

Personally, I say we must never give up with Grenfell Tower, until we see all those who are culpable prosecuted, and all victims and their families fully compensated for their loss, as with Liverpool football fans at the Hillsborough disaster.

Technological changes in the delivery of advice services have been embraced by the team as we endeavour to streamline working practices to improve client services. In March 2016, we were fortunate that Legal Geek - the UK's largest tech community of groups of lawyers, entrepreneurs, techies and industry experts – hosted Europe's

Manager's Report



Sean Canning

first ever law tech hackathon in our honour, and in June 2016, we also published our *Finding better problems for better solutions: Digital Insights for Hackney Advice Sector* report. The report examined ways in which we could maximise increased advances in technology to improve and streamline systems to enhance client experiences and increase access to advice.

HCLC's success is down to the energy, commitment and professionalism of all our staff and volunteers. Sadly in 2016/17, we said goodbye to a number of colleagues - Marie Froysa Hole, who left to pursue postgraduate legal studies; Hilton von Herbert who took a career break to travel the world;

Sara Taylor who joined Hammersmith & Fulham Law Centre; and Wendy Pettifer who retired and travelled to Calais to assist refugees. We wish them the very best in their new adventures. However, I am pleased to welcome on board Marcin Brajta, Sonia Lenegan, Kevin Long and Jamille Mohammed who together provide a breadth of experience. And thanks to all the existing team for continuing to take on all the challenges of our work.

I would like to thank my colleagues on the Board of Directors for their support during the year and give our best wishes to Mary Rachel McCabe and Paul Dillane who stood down due to new and heavy professional commitments.

I would also like to thank all our funders and patrons for their support and interest in our work, particularly the London Borough of Hackney, Trust for London and West Hackney Parochial Charities. Notwithstanding the challenges ahead, the organisation continues to thrive, largely due to the dedication and expertise of the staff.

I am grateful to the Law Centres Network (LCN) which continues to give tremendous support to HCLC, provides training, and acts as voice nationally for Law Centres around the UK.

Finally – Access to Justice must always be a right, regardless of income. This must always be our bottom line. We hope for better times for all those who look to the justice system for relief, for all those who need help from our welfare system.

Ian Rathbone
Chair, October 2017

Changes in the planning and funding of advice services mean that the Law Centre must be able to adapt and respond to new opportunities.

In 2017, we have collaborated with our advice colleagues to participate in the 'systems review' of advice services in Hackney in order to scope out future plans for design of advice service delivery in the borough. This work has proved very fruitful, providing opportunities to experiment with new systems of working as well as reducing waste in the system for clients.

Access to justice remains at the core of the daily work of a Law Centre. This principle was elegantly articulated in the 2017 Supreme Court case of *R (Unison) v Lord Chancellor* [2017] UKSC 51 which highlighted the important role of the courts and tribunals in the enforcement of legal rights. While ruling that the scheme for employment tribunal fees was unlawful, the judgment emphasised that in order for rights to be effective, individuals must be able to access the courts, when necessary, to enforce them.

In a key passage, the court resisted the Government's efforts to subordinate employment tribunals to that of a mere consumer service - and pronounced that the constitutional role of the courts and the administration of justice cannot be seen as just another public service.

Welfare Benefits work is a key area where HCLC has been successful in helping clients to challenge benefit decisions by the Department of Work and Pensions (DWP).

In August 2017, the Upper Tribunal ruled in CE/766/2016, that attempts by the DWP were unlawful in trying to prevent disability claimants with serious mental health problems appealing decisions to the tribunal if they failed to ask for an internal review within the one-month time limit.

Prior to August 2017, we had successfully represented client Julius Holgate, a double amputee who is wheelchair bound, in his appeal against the DWP's decision to refuse him Employment and Support Allowance. The decision followed an insensitive medical assessment in which Julius was awarded nil points, and told he was 'fit to work'.

Among Hackney Community Law Centre's other 2016/17 achievements have been the following:

- Our community pop up clinics have continued to help local residents, working in collaboration with our volunteers and partners at Debevoise and Plimpton LLP, Faegre Baker Daniels LLP and the BPP Law School. We are very grateful for all the pro bono help given by our partners and others.
- Our volunteers and interns programme continues to provide much needed opportunities for people to develop their legal skills, as well as help increase access for service users.

In alliance with our partners, HCLC will continue to respond innovatively to develop new services which will help us tackle the impact of poverty and help people exercise their legal rights to improve their quality of life.

Sean Canning
Manager, October 2017



Snapshot Service Statistics

1st and 2nd Quarter
April to September 2017

 **790**
Advice line calls

 **239**
People seen at drop-in
(First tier advice)

 **276**

People seen/directly referred
(1st tier advice referrals)

132

Clients visited
Housing pop up shop
Hackney library



4

Training courses
given by HCLC



‘LAW FOR GOOD’ HACKATHON

All images © Legal Geek



HCLC enters the brave new world of law tech



In March 2016, HCLC was delighted to have Legal Geek - the UK's largest tech community of groups of lawyers, entrepreneurs, techies and industry experts – organise a 'Law for Good' hackathon in our honour.

LAW FOR GOOD HACKATHON

The 'Law for Good' event was Europe's first ever law tech hackathon. Over the course of 24 hours, beginning on the evening of Friday the 18th of March, over 50 'coders' participated in the hackathon at Google Campus in Shoreditch - some flying in from as far as Romania, Gibraltar and the USA. The coders split into 10 teams of 'Hackers and Hustlers' to battle it out and conceive, build and pitch technical solutions to help HCLC deal with problems affecting the delivery of and access to our legal services. They were problems such as our reception and solicitors having to make too many phone calls to chase clients for documents or remind them of appointments. Other problems included not being able to take instructions from non-English speaking clients efficiently when no interpreter is available.

The hackathon was opened by Cllr Sade Etti, Speaker of Hackney, and addressed by HCLC's Sean Canning and Miranda Grell who gave presentations setting out the key challenges with which HCLC wished the coders to assist. Most of the HCLC team, from the board through to staff, attended the hackathon over the course of the Friday evening and Saturday daytime.

Jimmy Vestbirk with HCLC's Miranda Grell



The 10 teams that entered the hackathon all came up with superb ideas. However, the judges awarded 'Fresh Innovate' - a team made up of lawyers and tech experts from Freshfields Bruckhaus Deringer LLP - first prize for their design of an entirely new HCLC portal management system.

Cllr Ian Rathbone, HCLC Chair, said: *"I was very touched by the enthusiasm of the young people involved, all trying to find electronic ways to help us at the Law Centre continue to give access to justice for those who do not have the finances to pay for legal fees. And what they have done could help other Law Centres around the UK. What it shows to me is that people who are 20-somethings, and maybe a little over 20 something, are willing to help in whatever they can, and this is encouraging at a time when we see volunteering in the community and charity sector dropping for whatever reason. Coding for good – is good!"*

Thank you to the hackathon's fantastic judging panel: **Nathaniel Mathews**, Senior Solicitor HCLC; **Julia Salasky**, Founder Crowd Justice; **Karen Winton**, Managing Partner Nest VC; **Joanna Goodman**, Tech journalist, Guardian and Law Society Gazette; **Matthew Ryder QC**, barrister Matrix Chambers (Since September 2016 a Deputy Mayor of London); and **Campbell Unsworth**, Director, General Standards.

However, HCLC's biggest thanks goes to Jimmy Vestbirk, local Hackney resident and the energetic founder of Legal Geek (pictured with HCLC's Miranda Grell) for his vision and hard work in bringing the hackathon to fruition and for his deep care and interest in HCLC's clients and our local Hackney community.



MIRANDA GRELL ADDRESSES THE WESTMINSTER LEGAL POLICY FORUM

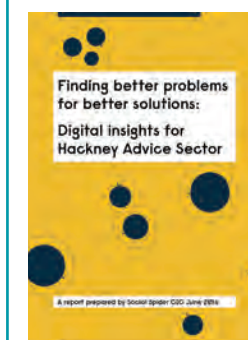
In January 2017, Miranda Grell, HCLC's development officer, addressed a conference organised by the Westminster Legal Policy Forum. The conference was entitled "Legal innovation and the business of law: technology, skills and new business models". Miranda gave a joint presentation with Jimmy Vestbirk, the founder of Legal Geek who organised a 'Law for Good' hackathon for HCLC in March 2016 (see pg 7).

Miranda spoke about the successful partnership Hackney Community Law Centre has formed with Legal Geek and the work being taken forward after the hackathon. Jimmy spoke about Legal Geek's 'Law for Good' programme and wider law tech developments.



Miranda Grell and Jimmy Vestbirk with Lord Clement-Jones.

Miranda and Jimmy's session was chaired by Lord Tim Clement-Jones, partner at DLA Piper LLP and Chair of Parliament's Select Committee on Artificial Intelligence.



2016 – DIGITAL ADVICE SUMMIT

In June 2016, HCLC hosted a 'Digital Advice Summit' at Hackney Town Hall. The successful event was attended by over 70 people including senior officers from the Big Lottery Fund and the Legal Education Foundation, as well as corporate law firms such as Allen and Overy and 33 Bedford Row barristers chambers. At the summit, HCLC launched a specially commissioned and wide ranging report into digital advice issues, prepared by Social Spider CIC.

Housing Report

HOUSING CASE STUDY 1

Mr & Mrs M were an elderly couple. Mrs M was disabled. The couple were facing imminent eviction from their privately rented accommodation and so made a homeless application to the council. The council rejected the couple's homeless application stating that their accommodation was suitable. However, a legal challenge to this decision led to the council accepting a full housing duty towards them. Unfortunately, Mr and Mrs M were only offered a new place to live on the third floor of a building, despite the council's own medical advisor recommending that they shouldn't be placed in accommodation above a first floor if there was no lift. The couple turned down the third floor flat and as a result the council withdraw its assistance. Mr and Mrs M were once again threatened with homelessness and approached HCLC. Jamille Mohammed and Nathaniel Mathews took on the case. They challenged the council's decision on the grounds of the couple's changed circumstances, imminent eviction and threat of homelessness. Jamille and Nathaniel used the most recent case law *R v Royal Borough of Kensington and Chelsea, London Borough of Ealing (2017) EWHC 24 (Admin)* to compel the council to reconsider its decision and allow Mr and Mrs M to make a fresh homelessness application. Following HCLC's intervention, the council once again accepted a full housing duty towards Mr and Mrs M and offered them temporary accommodation.

HOUSING CASE STUDY 2

HCLC's Jamille Mohammed assisted a young family who, after sofa surfing, eventually became street homeless. The family's children were aged 9 years old and 1 month old. The family, who spoke limited English, had become homeless after not fully understanding correspondence from the council offering them a place to live. When the family didn't respond, the council withdrew the offer of accommodation and said it would no longer accept a duty towards them. Jamille requested a review of the council's decision and also asked for the family to be provided with temporary accommodation, pending an outcome of the review. When this request was ignored, Jamille initiated a judicial review and secured a court order compelling the council to issue a decision on whether the family would be provided with accommodation pending the outcome of the review. Despite the council then refusing to provide the family with temporary accommodation, Jamille persisted with the case and brought another judicial review challenge against the council under section 17 of the Children Act 1989. This sets out a duty on public bodies to safeguard the welfare of children in need. The challenge was successful as the court found that the council had not considered its duty to the family's 9 year old and 1 month old children when it made its decision to discharge its duty towards them. As a result, the council conducted an immediate assessment of the family's situation under section 17 of the Children Act 1989 and they were provided with accommodation.

HOUSING CASE STUDY 3

HCLC's Kevin Long acted for Mr A. Mr A was a single man with a learning difficulty who had become the tenant of the property that he had lived in with his mother throughout his life. Mr A had fallen into rent arrears due to multiple debt problems he had with credit card companies and other lenders. HCLC's debt advisor Hope Olugbola advised Mr A and assisted him to obtain a Debt Relief Order (DRO). Kevin Long then assisted Mr A to defend the claim for possession being brought against him by his landlord as a result of the rent arrears. These rent arrears fell within the terms of the DRO and this provided Mr A with protection against the landlord's possession claim. Kevin also advanced other wider public law grounds in Mr A's defence and persuaded his landlord to drop his claim for possession and the debt.

Mr A kept his home, received further advice on money management and is no longer burdened by the debts.

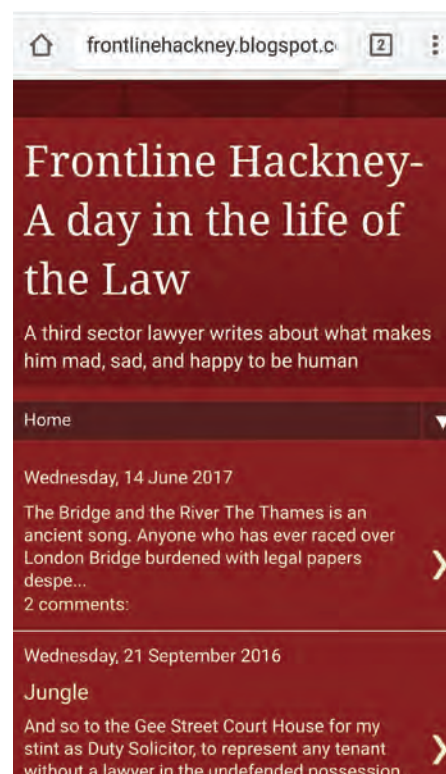


Frontline Hackney – A Day in the Life of the Law



Nathaniel Mathews

As well as being HCLC's Senior Solicitor, Nathaniel Mathews also writes a superb blog called '*Frontline Hackney – A Day in the Life of the Law*'. Here is one of Nathaniel's 2016 blog posts, which describes one eventful day as a 'duty solicitor' at Clerkenwell and Shoreditch County Court.



JUNGLE

And so to the Gee Street Courthouse for my stint as Duty Solicitor, to represent any tenant without a lawyer in the undefended possession list. A list where sometimes there are as little as five minutes a case for the District Judges to decide on who must stay, and who must go, and will live to fight another day.

Alberta has an eviction listed in two hours. A single parent who has had serious abdominal surgery this summer, she has been advised to come off her Jobseekers Allowance (JSA) to claim Employment and Support Allowance (ESA). She then failed for ESA, told to go back to JSA, then promptly advised by benefit officers to reclaim ESA- which is again refused, apparently when she was having surgery.

The Judge stays the warrant for 2 months. Bea was rehoused after being shot twice. She used to work with young offenders, more recently as a teaching assistant through an agency. Her income is unstable and in school holidays she is forced to claim Universal Credit. The shiny new benefit that insists on sending you your Housing Benefit (HB) directly to you, not your landlord, every month not every week. The theory is that people with proper jobs get paid monthly and this will teach Bea proper budgeting skills.

Yet hers is a weekly tenancy and she is paid by the week, when there is work. "I wish I had never claimed Universal Credit" says Bea, who offers to cash in her pension. Judge and Housing Officer feel sorry and embarrassed and case is adjourned generally on payment of rent plus 5 pounds a week. As she leaves, Bea promises to pay off her

arrears once the compensation for her injuries arrives- should it arrive.

Charlie worked as a bartender and cashier, always on the edge. He fell apart after he was assaulted and has just gone onto sickness benefits. After waiting for 3 hours he finally has to leave due to an anxiety attack. His housing officer is late and apologetic. There has been a screw-up at head office.

The housing officer agrees to adjourn the hearing for 2 weeks while Housing Benefit adjusts to Charlie's recently awarded ESA. While we wait to get on he tells me that he is in despair, because the new Housing Act is the death knell for social housing. Feeling mildly cheerful at only 3 cases I jump on the 55 bus and head back to the office. The sun is up, the air is clear, what could possibly go wrong? Then I am hit by a blizzard of homelessness.

Danny has lived for years in a fog of mental illness, substance abuse and domestic violence. Every time she has a kid the Council takes the child away. Incredibly, the Council does not think she is vulnerable, so she will be on the street tomorrow. Time to get a Judicial Review cranked up.

Eddy, who is almost 60, interrupts me. She has had a thyroid removed, is diabetic, but does not yet inject insulin, hears voices and is long term depressed. She is on ESA, a fairly stringent benefit that tests functional impairment. The Council says she is not vulnerable, and she will be on the streets quite soon.

Freda is a single mum who has recently given birth. As a European she is required to work to claim Tax Credits and housing. Yet despite her best

efforts her zero hours contracts fail to give her the paperwork the Council wants to verify her activities, so she and her baby will be homeless on Friday.

Gary and his family were evicted the day before yesterday. He suffers from mental illness and relies on local services. His kids are in local schools. Yet the emergency accommodation offered is outside London. Terrified of being uprooted, he refuses. The Council appears to have closed his case and will do nothing more to help. The Supreme Court says this is the wrong approach, yet it happens every day.

Helga was found intentionally homeless when she realised that her landlord was going to have her home repossessed because he could not keep up with the mortgage. She kept the rent moneys so that she could rent somewhere else but could not find a landlord prepared to help benefit claimants, even with the nest egg. She is worried that social workers will take her kid into care in 5 days time because she is homeless.

India left care and started to work in various nurseries. Tragically this success story foundered when due to the various changes in her jobs, the long hours, the delayed HB assessments, she lost the plot, had a nervous breakdown, fell into rent arrears and was evicted. Having been found intentionally homeless by the Council, she may risk her own child being taken into care. She will be homeless in the next few days also.

Jamil worked 30 years in Sainsbury's and then became too ill to carry on. He's 60 with various ailments, high blood pressure, depression. He paid into the system all his life and did nothing wrong. Not vulnerable enough it seems. Yet, at the last minute, the Council

offers him sheltered housing. Problem is, the offer hasn't come through yet, and his temporary accommodation was terminated yesterday.

As I foolishly wander by reception Kerry grabs me. Her marital home was sold 8 years ago after mortgage arrears arose, but there was substantial equity left after the mortgage was paid off. She has been homeless, she tells me, for those 8 years because the lending Company have tied her up with paperwork ever since.

ALL IN ONE DAMN DAY

At this point my brain shuts down and I have to leave the rest of the alphabet until tomorrow. What conclusions can be drawn from a single day? Is it that I hate the various Councils who have made palpably inhumane decisions about the vulnerability of sick people and are prepared to put them on the streets? Not really.

Funding cuts mean there are fewer people working in those Councils, and diminishing properties in London for people of little means. Yet I wish that the wealthier leafy suburbs of West London would stop dumping poor people in East London, abnegating all responsibility, and then turning to their voters with a big smile and telling their voters that the reason that they have lower Council Tax is that they are more efficient.

More efficient at turning a blind eye to the disabled, perhaps. Is it that there are more evictions and more homeless problems but less lawyer to help? Yes. The Legal Aid cuts have meant that in every single one of the cases that I have mentioned a loss of service for people with money problems have pushed the

household into homelessness. Yet even though Legal Aid is still there to prevent the roof over your head, fewer lawyers want to do it.

The warhorses retire. The colts shy away. Is it that poor people and people of modest means are being forced out of London? Yes. Those of you who believe that this is healthy expression of the free market, consider. Where will the bartenders and cleaners you rely on live? When you have a stroke, who will change your bedpan? Is it that Universal Credit is the panacea? No.

The machinery so far has transferred HB applications to the Department of Work and Pensions, who have lost every letter that I have written. This does not look promising. Is it that the Housing Act will fundamentally wreck social housing? Yes. Council Housing will be decimated, which is an expression that is almost always used wrongly. Think 10% of Council Stock being sold off every year without any replacements for those who need homes.

Am I in despair? No. Against all the odds, with 3 solicitors leaving and awaiting replacements, with our debt adviser breaking his leg at our front door, with our administrator Bella injuring her knee collecting the DX, we have something special.

We have the volunteers. Angharad who was hit by a car on her way to issue a Judicial Review, but issued. Justin, who helped us win 3 asylum cases in one day. Aniko, who persuaded the Council not to call the police when Mrs Angry came to discuss her rent arrears, then got at 3,000 backdated benefit claim. Onika, who holds the fort. Welcome to London, the most affluent city on Earth. Welcome to the Jungle.

Welfare Benefits Report

CASE STUDY 1

In 2017, Hackney Community Law Centre (HCLC) helped a client to win a housing benefit case that took almost two years to resolve. Our client H was involved in a serious traffic accident outside the UK. H nearly died, was in a halo brace and was unable to move. H subsequently developed Post Traumatic Stress Disorder and struggled to cope with everything. H's relationship with his partner broke down and he was traumatised.

H had a flat in Hackney and signed a tenancy before the accident. Even though he had told the council he intended to return to his flat when he was better, the council refused to pay H housing benefit because it said he was not living in his flat. As he was recovering from his injuries, H was unable to work and had to borrow money from his family to pay his rent. This was on top of trying to cope with his physical injuries and mental health problems.

The council then refused H's application for a review of its decision and did not inform him that he had the right to appeal. H came to HCLC in 2016, nearly a year after his unsuccessful housing benefit claim. We appealed on his behalf. The council initially refused to even send the appeal to the tribunal for a hearing. It took over five months for HCLC to obtain a decision from a judge saying that H's appeal had been validly made.

When the case got to the tribunal, the council continued to argue that H was not entitled to receive housing benefit as he was "not living in his flat". However, after only 10 minutes of listening to the evidence, the judge made a ruling agreeing with all of HCLC's points in support of H. The judge further pointed out to the council that there are rules that allow someone recovering from injuries - and unable to occupy their accommodation - to still receive housing benefit. It took nearly two years to overturn the council's original decision but H's housing benefit has now been reinstated.



CASE STUDY 2

HCLC's Marcin Brajta assisted K, a vulnerable client with her Personal Independence Payment (PIP) appeal. K was a victim of domestic violence, had a history of substance abuse and was previously homeless. K had initially been receiving Disability Living Allowance (DLA) but decided to become a full-time student so that she could become independent and have an income of her own. K's DLA was stopped when she was transferred onto PIP. As a full-time student who was not receiving PIP, K was unable to claim housing benefit and was therefore unable to leave her abusive partner. Marcin helped K to win her PIP appeal and increase the number of points awarded to her from 2 to 8 - the minimum number of points required to qualify to receive PIP. As a result, K became eligible to receive housing benefit and left her abusive partner.

CASE STUDY 3

HCLC housing solicitor Jamille Mohammed was on duty at Clerkenwell & Shoreditch County Court. This meant that he was required to advise, assist and represent anyone attending the court that day if they didn't have a solicitor.

As always, there were lots of people waiting and Jamille prevented a number of defendant tenants from being evicted. One housing association tenant had substantial rent arrears and could not demonstrate mitigating circumstances or the ability to manage her tenancy going forward. In simple terms, the client had buried her head in the sand. Luckily, the client attended her court hearing and Jamille was able to identify some housing benefit discrepancies that might help her fight the possession proceedings being brought against her.

Jamille successfully persuaded the judge to adjourn the client's hearing for 28 days to allow HCLC to investigate further. The client formally instructed HCLC and Jamille soon got to work in partnership with HCLC's welfare benefits advisor Marcin Brajta.

Jamille and Marcin found that the client had been entitled to almost £6,000 in backdated housing benefit. They quickly helped her to claim it, meaning that the client was no longer in arrears with her rent. At the next court hearing at Clerkenwell and Shoreditch County Court the housing association withdrew the possession proceedings against the client.



Julius Holgate – overcoming adversity through the law

In January 2017, Hackney Community Law Centre (HCLC) was approached by Julius Holgate, a disabled double amputee. Julius had applied for the Employment and Support Allowance (ESA) benefit and been asked to attend a medical assessment. At the assessment, Julius had been awarded a total of 0 points and found 'fit to work'.

At the time of the decision, the Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) stated that because Julius' arms were in working order, he could use them to "climb" stairs with his arms

and therefore had "mobility". HCLC's Marcin Brajta helped Julius to fight the case, while HCLC development officer Miranda Grell and HCLC Chair Ian Rathbone mounted a vigorous



Julius speaks in Parliament about his case.

press campaign to draw the media's attention to Julius' plight. The press interest was extremely high with the case being published in newspapers including Hackney Gazette, the Hackney Citizen, The Metro, the Huffington Post and The Independent.

In late February 2017, following HCLC's legal challenge and press campaign, Julius received a letter from the DWP informing him that it had reconsidered its decision and would now pay him the support component of ESA. This meant that Julius would no longer be forced to conduct distressing and fruitless searches for work or attend the job centre for monitoring appointments.

Reacting to the news, Julius Holgate said:

"I'm glad the DWP has seen sense. I'm just still sorry that other people will have to go through what I have been through though. I wish that the DWP would be more careful when they're assessing people. This all caused me a lot of stress and anxiety. When they stopped my ESA and I had no money, I fell into debt and had to pawn my jewellery to survive. Without Hackney Community Law Centre, a lot of people would go under. I am grateful for the help that HCLC gave me".

Julius' HCLC caseworker Marcin Brajta said:

"I'm pleased that there was a successful resolution to Julius' case. After HCLC got involved, things moved very quickly for him. Julius can now get on with his life without worrying about having to attend the job centre, which was adversely affecting his health."

Chair Ian Rathbone said:

"What great news this is for Julius



HCLC takes Julius to Parliament for Proof Magazine launch



Marcin Brajta and Julius speaking in Parliament

and for justice but what a shocking thing to happen to someone who has already suffered such a terrible loss only months earlier. Well done to our excellent team, and Marcin in particular. If it was not for the Law Centre, where would Julius be now? There are many more like Julius who are suffering as a result of callous and cold-hearted benefit cuts. An apology to Julius from the DWP - squeezed out after they were caught out - is not enough. We want to see changes of direction here, of sympathy and care for people in their time of need."

In July 2017, HCLC took Julius to the House of Commons to tell his story to the Shadow Justice Secretary and other Access to Justice campaigners at the launch of Proof Magazine (see pg 22).

HCLC's Team in 2016/17: Staff, Board, Interns and Volunteers

HCLC intern Paul Erdunast wins Series 74 of Channel 4 Countdown in June 2016



STAFF MEMBER	POSITION
Onika Adams	Paralegal (01/08/16 to 30/11/16)
Aniko Ajozi	Paralegal (04/0/16 to 31/10/16)
Marcin Brajta	Welfare Benefits Caseworker (joined 05/09/15)
Sean Canning	Manager
Bella Donnelly	Administrator
Marie Froya Hole	Solicitor (left 31/07/16)
Miranda Grell	Development Officer
Sonia Lenegan	Solicitor (joined 23/01/17)
Kevin Long	Solicitor (joined 14/11/16)
Nathaniel Mathews	Solicitor
Jamille Mohammed	Solicitor (joined 07/11/16)
Diane Morrison	Solicitor
Hope Olugbola	Debt Caseworker
Wendy Pettifer	Solicitor (left 31/10/16)
Kim Sin	Receptionist/Administrator
Sara Taylor	Solicitor (left 31/08/16)
Hilton von Herbert	Senior Caseworker (left 31/01/17)

INTERNS AND VOLUNTEERS

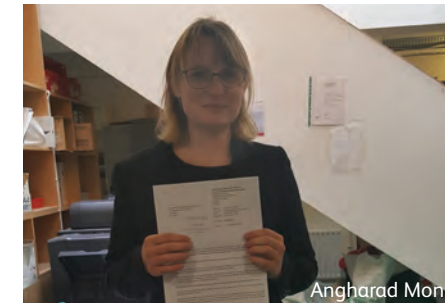


MEET THE HCLC INTERN – Soner Koroglu

Soner Koroglu joined HCLC as an intern in April 2017. He stayed at the Centre for 6 months, working predominantly on housing law cases under the supervision of Nathaniel Mathews, HCLC's Senior Solicitor. In his 6 months with HCLC, some of the housing cases Soner worked on included evictions, disrepair and possession hearings. Soner also prepared instructions for counsel and environmental health officers and made applications to the High Court. Soner also attended the Clerkenwell and Shoreditch County Court to assist Jamille Mohammed when he acted as duty solicitor at the court. Before his internship at HCLC, Soner had worked extensively in the courts throughout the UK as a Ministry of Justice approved court interpreter and as a senior outdoor clerk for a family law firm based in the City of London. Soner completed his Legal Practice Course at BPP Law School and hopes to become a solicitor.

MEET THE HCLC VOLUNTEER – Angharad Monk

"I volunteered for the first time for HCLC in the summer before my law conversion course. Since then I have returned every summer, and have just recently begun work as a paralegal.



It has been a pleasure and a privilege to be part of the team. From my first days volunteering I was struck by the brilliance and commitment of the solicitors and case-workers.

In the face of exceptionally difficult times for social welfare lawyers, HCLC provides first-class legal representation to the most vulnerable in the surrounding communities. A particular strength is the Law Centre's ability to tackle multiple aspects of complex legal situations. HCLC treats its clients' legal problems in a holistic manner, and different caseworkers will address aspects of entangled legal problems, achieving successful outcomes where other solicitors acting in regard to only one aspect would not.

I have seen first-hand the challenges the Law Centre faces in the aftermath of the drastic changes to legal aid in recent years. HCLC has faced these challenges with resilience, creativity and determination, finding ways to provide advice and services in many areas which are now out of

scope. I would, and frequently do, recommend to any aspiring lawyer that they consider spending some time volunteering at HCLC.

From day one you are involved in all elements of casework and begin to develop both the soft-skills of a lawyer and a working knowledge of a variety of areas of law. There is a very strong open door approach meaning that the support is always there to ensure that volunteers can learn from solicitors and gradually take on increasing responsibility.

The work itself couldn't be more important to the clients – many of which, if it were not for HCLC, would have no access to representation at all. Seeing the work at HCLC before beginning my legal studies was invaluable as it showed me a completely different side to the legal profession from the one which many people imagine.

I believe it is beneficial to anyone to understand the challenges, and rewards, of social welfare work before beginning a legal career. In my own case I loved it so much I am pursuing a career in this area."

HCLC INTERNATIONAL VOLUNTEER – Allie from Florida



HCLC was delighted to welcome US summer intern Allie Clements to the Centre in the summer of 2017. Allie came from Florida and was studying for an undergraduate degree in Political Science at Florida Gulf Coast University. She spent the summer in London as part of a 'Cultural Experiences Abroad' programme and interned with HCLC 4 days a week. Allie worked most closely with HCLC benefits caseworker Marcin Brajta and HCLC Employment Solicitor Diane Morrison on welfare benefits and employment law cases. Though she had not yet formally studied law, Allie helped prepare brilliant written submissions for HCLC clients with cases in the first tier social security tribunal.

HCLC would like to thank all our 2016 and 2017 interns and volunteers:

Forida Matin; Aniko Ajozi; Shah M Alam; Beatrice Schofer; Justin Johnson; Justin Johnson; Angharad Monk; Jessica Silverstone; Olivia Duncan; Kate Temple-Mabe; Ese Badmus; Terry-King Emmanuel; Aisha Kabejja; Marisa Adams; Tarik Basri; Paul Immanuel; Peter Walker; Mark Locke; Thu Trang Nguyen; Laura Chapman; Semra Cekin; Hadia Choudhary; Aleksandra Zieleniewicz; Julide Bredee; Jolamihan Atoki; Soner Koroglu; Katherine Oredugba; Shantelle Francis; Beya Rivers; Nirmal Gill; Rukan Hazar; Hamza Adia; Usmaan Mufti; Daniel Olugbola; Juliette Glennie; Suzannah von Strandmann; Cecilia Correale; Eleanor Kyle; Cressida Mawdesley-Thomas; Yasmin Elgouze; Amani Ukaegbu.



HCLC BOARD MEMBERS

HCLC board members have continued to be hugely supportive of the day-to-day work of the Law Centre. Our thanks goes to our hard-working and indefatigable Chair Ian Rathbone (pictured left in June 2017 at a Hackney 'More in Common' community festival with HCLC manager Sean Canning) in particular. Ian is always on hand to encourage, cajole and support HCLC staff. HCLC is very lucky to have him.

HCLC'S BOARD MEMBERS IN 2016 AND 2017

Ian Rathbone
Paul Dillane
Victor McAllister
Mary-Rachel McCabe
Cllr Deniz Oguzkanli
Adenike Ojo
Megan Redmond
Andrew Wingfield

A warm HCLC welcome to:



Marcin Brajta

MARCIN BRAJTA

Marcin Brajta joined HCLC as our new Welfare Benefits caseworker in September 2016. Marcin previously worked for Stirling Citizens Advice Bureau (CAB) as its Income Maximisation and Debt Caseworker. He also worked on housing, employment and immigration cases, acting as a trainer on immigration law to all new trainee advisors. Prior to working at the CAB, Marcin worked as a court approved interpreter providing Polish-English translation in courts, police stations and hospitals. He gained a diploma in Public Service Interpreting in 2012. Marcin holds a BA degree in Scottish Law with sociology at the University of Stirling. He gained a distinction on his Graduate Diploma in Law from the University of Law. Marcin's native language is Polish and he also speaks Russian to a high level. In his spare time, Marcin enjoys playing the guitar. He is a keen cyclist and has cycled around many of Scotland's islands in the Inner and Outer Hebrides.

JAMILLE MOHAMMED AND KEVIN LONG

In November 2016, HCLC was delighted to welcome Jamille Mohammed and Kevin Long to the team.

Jamille Mohammed graduated in 2002 with an honours degree in Law and completed his Legal Practice Course in 2007. Jamille has practiced housing law ever since. Jamille is an experienced advocate and regularly represents

clients as a duty solicitor at Central London County Court and Clerkenwell & Shoreditch County Court. Prior to joining the Law Centre, Jamille worked in private practice as a joint director of a busy housing department and also in the city. In his spare time, Jamille is an active political campaigner, lobbying the Government and his local MPs about access to justice and the importance of legal aid. Jamille was elected the Deputy Mayor of Southwark for 2017/18, is a school governor and plays badminton.



Jamille Mohammed and Kevin Long

Prior to joining HCLC, Kevin Long had worked in social welfare law for 15 years, beginning as an advisor at Brent Private Tenants' Rights Group before joining Lambeth Law Centre in 2006 where he qualified as a solicitor. In that time, Kevin practised immigration, employment and benefit law, but housing has remained his core area of expertise. Kevin has experience of representing tenants and homeless applicants in all fields of housing law, but particularly enjoys public law possession cases. At Lambeth Law Centre, Kevin successfully acted in a series of cases where groups of social housing tenants subject to local regeneration schemes were facing eviction. In 2012 Kevin was also featured in the Guardian Newspaper's 'Lawyer to Watch' series. In his spare time, Kevin enjoys walking on Hackney Marshes, cycling the Lea Valley with

his children, and long distance running. Kevin has competed in numerous marathons and ultra-marathons.



Sonia Lenegan

SONIA LENEGAN

Sonia Lenegan joined HCLC in January 2017. She previously volunteered at South West London Law Centre while she was a Legal Practice Course student. Sonia was admitted to the roll as a solicitor in November 2010, accredited as a Level Two Senior Caseworker under the Law Society's Immigration and Accreditation Scheme in 2010 and became a Supervisor in 2012. Sonia has a wide experience of immigration and asylum law, particularly in judicial review matters. Her experience includes, but is not limited to, applications for leave to remain in the UK, asylum claims, appeals, trafficking cases, unlawful detention cases and removal matters.

Sonia previously worked in the public law department at a private practice firm and also at the Anti-Trafficking and Labour Exploitation Unit. She is a co-convenor of the Courts and Tribunal Working Group for the Immigration Law Practitioners Association. In her spare time, Sonia is an active political campaigner. She also does yoga, pilates and runs marathons. Sonia enjoys going to live music gigs and festivals and also loves art, particularly street art photography. She is an avid traveller.

And a fond farewell to: Wendy Pettifer

WENDY PETTIFER

In April 2016, HCLC said au revoir (*but not goodbye*) to our wonderful Senior Housing Solicitor Wendy Pettifer who retired.

Wendy, a local Hackney resident since 1970, joined HCLC as a Senior Housing Solicitor in 2009. She had already served on HCLC's Management Committee between 1980 and 2007.

Wendy chose to join HCLC after working in private practice and at the College of Law (now the University of Law). She says she felt that she wanted to give something back and help her local Hackney community through her legal skills.

Over the course of her career, Wendy took on cases involving homelessness, serious disrepair, migrant women and children at the highest levels. One such case was the House of Lords case of 'Harrow v Fahia' which expanded the definition of settled accommodation to include people who had not possessed a formal tenancy at the time of becoming homeless.

As a housing solicitor at HCLC, Wendy took a great interest in representing migrant women and children who are particularly vulnerable because they have no recourse to public funds and therefore no access to mainstream support services.

Wendy was also instrumental in commissioning and advising on HCLC and Hackney Migrant Centre's 2015 'A Place to Call Home' report.

Outside of work, Wendy has been an active social justice campaigner and international legal observer. She sits on



Wendy Pettifer

the Executive of the Haldane Society of Socialist Lawyers, is a member of the Greek Solidarity campaign and between 2009 and 2011 travelled regularly to Tunisia with REMDH, a European network of human rights lawyers, to collate first-hand witness and documentary evidence of human rights abuses being perpetrated by the President Ben Ali regime.

Though retired, Wendy does not plan to put her feet up in any way. Wendy plans to remain active in community housing campaigns across London, spend time abroad working with unaccompanied migrant children with familial links to the UK and also spend more time developing her talent for creative writing.

Commenting on her retirement, Wendy Pettifer said:

"I was proud to end my full time career working with colleagues at Hackney Community Law Centre who remain committed to fighting for access to justice in the face of legal aid cuts, hostile legislation and impoverished courts and local authorities. Thanks to Ian Rathbone for his support and to Hackney council for theirs."

HCLC Chair Ian Rathbone said:

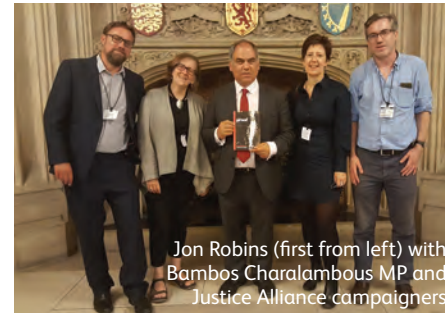
"Wendy Pettifer has been a faithful supporter of Law Centres and their ethos from early in her career as a lawyer and in these present dark days of legal aid cuts and blocking the needy

from access to the justice system, she has continued to shine a light for justice to be available to all. She has helped many trainees and juniors to understand the changing complexities of the housing and welfare system and of the law generally. And given them a political education at the same time! She does not mince her words and has been forthright in her political standpoint down the years. She has spoken from her heart. And why not? Lawyers have political views about the injustices they see in their work and in the system. Why should they not fight for a better system of justice that is accessible for all?

Wendy is a model of what it means to serve others, and fight for their rights and for fairness in an unfair society. I hope that there will many others who will follow on from her as we continue to struggle for a better society, one which was envisioned all those years ago by Wendy and lawyers like her, in setting up Law Centres."

Everyone at HCLC wishes Wendy Pettifer a brilliant retirement and an exciting next life chapter!

HCLC patrons



Jon Robins (first from left) with Bambos Charalambous MP and Justice Alliance campaigners

HCLC's patrons all have a connection to Hackney, either having lived or worked here. All of our patrons have also been involved in actively campaigning in the public arena on social issues such as housing and immigration, which are the areas of specialist legal advice provided by Hackney Community Law Centre.



Tunde Okewale HCLC patron receiving his MBE from Prince Charles at Buckingham Palace



TUNDE OKEWALE AWARDED AN MBE IN 2016 AND AN HONORARY DOCTORATE IN 2017!

HCLC is extremely proud of HCLC patron Tunde Okewale, who was awarded an MBE in the June 2016 Birthday Honours List, followed by an Honorary Doctorate from Sheffield Hallam University in 2017. Tunde joined the HCLC team as a patron in November 2014. Tunde grew up in Hackney and attended Orchard Primary School and Cardinal Pole Secondary School, which is literally around the corner from HCLC's office in Lower Clapton Road. Tunde is a committed criminal defence barrister who has an impressive practice for his level of call. His comprehensive practice comprises general crime, serious crime and extradition as well as appellate work in the Court of Appeal and the Administrative Court. All of Tunde's work encompasses an element of Human Rights and commitment to issues of social justice and civil liberties. As well as his work as a barrister, Tunde founded 'Urban Lawyers', an initiative set up to provide inspiration to law students from non-traditional backgrounds through online resources, networking and events. Urban Lawyers also provides education to young people about their legal rights..

JON ROBINS LAUNCHES LEGAL AID MAGAZINE IN PARLIAMENT

In July 2017, HCLC's Marcin Brajta and Miranda Grell travelled up to the House of Commons with summer intern Allie and work experience student Liam, to attend the launch of the issue 3 of Proof Magazine – 'Why legal aid matters', edited by HCLC patron Jon Robins. The launch was hosted by

Richard Burgon MP, the Shadow Justice Secretary.

Proof Magazine is produced by online magazine *The Justice Gap* (for which HCLC's Miranda Grell is a commissioning editor) and The Justice Alliance – a coalition of charities, community groups, legal campaigners and trade unions who campaign against Government cuts to legal aid.

Issue 3 of Proof Magazine tells the story of why legal aid matters and highlights the devastating impact of the Legal Aid, Sentencing and Punishment of Offenders Act (LASPO) 2012. HCLC's Miranda Grell participated in a roundtable discussion that is featured in the magazine and the publication was funded through a crowdfunding campaign that she helped to run for Jon Robins.

It was particularly pleasing that HCLC client Julius Holgate joined the HCLC team at the 'Why legal aid matters' launch to speak about his terrible experience with the Department for Work and Pensions (see pg 16).

Congratulations to HCLC patron Jon Robins and Proof Magazine's other editors Rhona Friedman and Matt Foot (pictured with Bambos Charalambous MP, Member of Parliament for Enfield South) for producing a superb magazine.

HCLC IS EXTREMELY GRATEFUL TO HAVE THE SUPPORT OF THE FOLLOWING PATRONS:

Diane Abbott MP; Louise Christian; Nicky Gavron AM; Manjit S Gill QC; Meg Hillier MP; Owen Jones; Jean Lambert MEP; Lord Colin Low of Dalston CBE; Rajiv Menon QC; Declan O'Callaghan; Tunde Okewale; Jon Robins; Sir Tony Robinson; Lord Thomas of Gresford QC.

Immigration Report

CASE STUDY 1

Hackney Community Law Centre's immigration solicitor Sonia Lenegan has been successful in winning a number of asylum appeals. One of Sonia's 2017 cases involved her appealing a Home Office decision to dismiss a HCLC client's application for asylum.

Our client, a gay man from Algeria, was originally told by the Home Office that they didn't believe that he was gay. The Home Office stated that even if our client was gay, it was safe for him to be returned to Algeria. This is a common position adopted by the Home Office in most sexuality based claims. The Home Office also stated that our client's account was "not credible" due to there being a delay of several years between him arriving in the UK and making his asylum claim. In HCLC's experience, many clients are initially simply unaware that they are able to make a claim for asylum for non-political reasons.

Sonia prepared our Algerian client's appeal against the Home Office's decision and it went to a hearing in the First Tier Tribunal (FTT). The FTT held that the Home Office had made the wrong decision and also held that our client *is* gay and that the delay in his seeking asylum should not be held against him.

Although the current leading country guidance case of *OO (Gay Men) Algeria CG [2016] UKUT 00065 (IAC)* made it more difficult for gay Algerian men to be granted asylum, in our client's case we were able to establish that there were circumstances unique to him that meant that a grant of refugee status was appropriate.

CASE STUDY 2

HCLC Chair Ian Rathbone was approached by Citizens UK about the case of W. W came from the Ivory Coast. His partner was a European Economic Area (EEA) national who was employed. The couple had been together since 2012 and from 2013 lived together with W's partner's two children.

On the 12th of July 2016, the couple applied for a residence card for W as an extended family member of an EEA national exercising treaty rights in the UK. On the 31st of January 2017, the Home Office refused to grant W a residence card or consider the application. It was obvious that the Home Office had not looked at all of the evidence provided.

On the 21st of March 2017, Sonia Lenegan sent a pre action letter challenging the Home Office's refusal. On the 22nd of March 2017, the Home Office responded to the pre-action letter, making the same errors as contained in its initial refusal. On the 28th of March 2017, the Home Office sent a letter stating that W could be removed from the UK any time in the following 7 days.

The Legal Aid Agency granted HCLC funding for W's case on the 4th of April 2017 and Sonia lodged an application for Judicial Review on the 6th of April 2017. Sonia also asked the Tribunal to make an order to prevent W from being removed from the UK whilst legal proceedings were ongoing. Interim relief was granted by the Upper Tribunal the same day.

The Home Office finally conceded on the 5th of May 2017 and agreed to withdraw its decision to remove W. It also agreed to make a new decision within three months and pay HCLC's costs.

When the Home Office did not make a decision within three months, Sonia sent a further pre-action letter regarding its non-compliance, and within two weeks, HCLC received a letter stating that W's residence card had been granted. The letter contained W's residence card.



Friends of HCLC and donations



Rev Andy Pakula and HCLC's Miranda Grell at New Unity Church



Blue Plaque to Harold Pinter being unveiled

In 2011, HCLC launched 'Friends of HCLC'. Friends of HCLC are supporters who make a regular financial contribution to our work.



Andrew Lock and Julia Hayns



Sophie Earnshaw



Louise Christian

We are very grateful to the following Friends of HCLC for their generous and regular financial support:

- Louise Christian
- Sophie Earnshaw
- Matthew Feehily
- Julia Hayns
- Sally Jeffery
- Andrew Lock
- Alice Pillar

DONATIONS

We are very grateful to the following people and organisations for their donations to the Law Centre in 2016 and 2017:

- **Hackney Umpires Cricket Club** for donating £120 - the proceeds of sale from its 2016 Year Book to HCLC in January 2016.
- **Faegre Baker Daniels Foundation** for donating \$3,500 towards the running of the Centre in January 2016.
- **Hackney Methodist Church** for its £200 donation in February 2016
- **Faegre Baker Daniels Foundation** for raising £1,500 for HCLC through the 2016 London Legal Walk.
- **Farrer and Co Charitable Trust** for sending HCLC a cheque for £5,000 towards general running costs in January 2017.
- **New Unity Church** for donating over £1,500 to HCLC in February 2017.
- **Lady Antonia Fraser DBE** for making a £500 donation to HCLC in March 2017.

NEW UNITY FEBRUARY 2017 DONATION

HCLC is very grateful to our friends at the New Unity Unitarian church based in Newington Green. For the second time in three years, New Unity has

chosen HCLC as one of its "charities of the month" and raised funds for the Law Centre during its weekly Sunday services. We were delighted and astonished to receive a cheque for over £1,500 following New Unity's February 2017 collection. Thank you again to Rev Andy Pakula and everyone at New Unity!

LADY ANTONIA FRASER DBE

In March 2017, Hackney Community Law Centre (HCLC) was deeply honoured to receive a £500 donation from Lady Antonia Fraser DBE. Lady Antonia is a British author of history, novels, biographies and detective fiction. Her first major work was a 1969 biography of Mary - Queen of Scots, which was followed by several other biographies, including *Cromwell*, *Our Chief of Men* in 1973. Lady Antonia made her generous donation to HCLC in loving memory of her late husband Harold Pinter CH CBE.

Harold Pinter was a playwright, screenwriter, director and actor. He won the Nobel Prize for Literature in 2005. Harold Pinter's writing career spanned more than 50 years. One of the most influential modern British dramatists, his best-known plays include *The Birthday Party* (1957), *The Homecoming* (1964), and *Betrayal* (1978), each of which he adapted for the screen. His screenplay adaptations of others' works include *The Servant* (1963), *The Go-Between* (1971), *The French Lieutenant's Woman* (1981), *The Trial* (1993), and *Sleuth* (2007). He also directed/acted in radio, stage, television, and film productions of his own and others' works.

Harold Pinter was born in Hackney and attended Hackney Downs School. At school, he was encouraged to write by



Antonia Fraser (c Sue Greenhill)

an inspirational English teacher, and his first published poetry appeared in the school newspaper. In 2012, HCLC Chair Ian Rathbone (also a member of the Clapton Pond Neighborhood Action Group) organised for a commemorative blue plaque to be placed on Harold Pinter's childhood home in Thistlewaite Road.

In January 2017, Lady Antonia appeared on BBC Radio Four's Broadcasting House programme. Tunde Okewale MBE, a patron of Hackney Community Law Centre, was another guest on the programme. Tunde spoke to Lady Antonia in great detail about the many problems currently being experienced by people in Hackney who



Harold Pinter (Roy Jones/ArenaPAL)

need access to justice. Lady Antonia immediately contacted HCLC to make a donation.

Lady Antonia said:

"When I heard about the work of the Hackney Community Law Centre, I immediately decided to give a donation in the name of my late husband Harold Pinter who was born & brought up in Hackney; Harold was proud of his Hackney origins and would have been delighted to help such a good cause".

Commenting on Lady Antonia's donation to HCLC, Chair Ian Rathbone said: *"Harold Pinter's first success as a playwright depended on his unique understanding of working class and poor people, what their lives were like and how they spoke, which is reflected in many of his plays. He would have understood the needs for such people to have free access to justice. Harold Pinter was also born and schooled in Hackney, and so it is appropriate that Lady Antonia, his widow, has made this generous donation to the Law Centre in Hackney in his memory. "I know that the staff team and Board of Directors are thrilled by this encouraging gesture which will help to boost the work we do for the people of Hackney."*

Employment Report

CASE STUDY 1

In the spring of 2016, HCLC's Diane Morrison represented a former Local Authority employee who, in 2015, was forced to resign from her job after 8 years of service and bring a claim for constructive unfair dismissal at the East London Tribunal. The client was a young woman who had to foot the employment tribunal bill in full (£1,250) as her claims also included complaints of sexual harassment, sex and race discrimination.

The client was found to have been let down by several managers, all of whom had failed to follow internal procedures to protect her from harassment over an eighteen month period. Our client's managers took no proper steps to manage a fellow colleague who had become fixated with her. The policies and procedures that were supposed to have been in place to protect her fell away in favour of her harasser and he continued his campaign of unwanted conduct.

Diane assisted the client from the beginning of her claim right through to a full 8 day hearing at the Employment Tribunal, which took place in March 2016. The entire matter took a year from first instructions through to final hearing, with the preparation and final conduct of the case involved litigation preparation spanning several weeks, late nights and weekends.

Six weeks after the hearing, the tribunal awarded our client over £33,000 in damages.

CASE STUDY 2

Y was a European Union (EU) national who approached HCLC in late 2015. Y's employers had deemed her unsuitable to continue delivering high level English tuition at the UK university where she worked - despite having previously accredited her to do so. Y felt that her employer had made this decision because she was a French national and could also be clearly identified as a person of Muslim faith.

Y decided to bring a claim against the university. HCLC's Diane Morrison supported Y and helped Y to negotiate a settlement. In the spring of 2016, Y accepted the university's offer of a payment of £10,000 in recognition of the unfair treatment she had suffered.

CASE STUDY 3

J worked for a private company in Waltham Forest. J had recently had a daughter and wanted to work flexible hours when she returned to work. J's negotiations with her employer were difficult and the stress contributed to J falling ill and struggling with the idea of returning to work. By the time J's employer was willing to consider a reduced hours' contract for J, she had given up and could not cope. As her sick pay came to an end, J applied for state benefits.

When J's employer threatened to dismiss her, J visited HCLC and Diane Morrison helped her to reach a settlement with her employer. J's employer accepted the proposed settlement and J left the company with a payment of just under £2,000. She also received a favourable reference.



HCLC's Diane Morrison, 2014 Law Society Excellence Award winner, continues to successfully fight for the legal rights of vulnerable workers and employees.

Debt Report

CASE STUDY 1

R was a client with multiple priority and non-priority debts. R also suffered with poor health and there was little prospect of him returning to paid employment in the near future.

HCLC's Hope Olugbola carried out an assessment of R's financial situation. R owed less than £20,000. Hope advised R on his various options, one of which was to try and obtain a Debt Relief Order (DRO).

With Hope's assistance, R's DRO application was successful. R is now debt free and relieved of the stress and sleepless nights, which were adversely affecting his health before he sought help from HCLC.

CASE STUDY 2

V was a single woman with no dependents employed on a zero hours' contract. She was a returning client, having been advised by HCLC five years previously about her rent arrears. HCLC had helped V to avoid being evicted.

V returned to HCLC with a mix of priority and non priority debts. Her new rent arrears were just over £2,000 and Hackney Housing had returned to the county court to try and seek a possession order. V also had two years of council tax arrears totalling £1,500, a gas debt of £850 and three credit card debts, totalling £4,650.

Hope Olugbola assessed V's case and concluded that she should have been receiving a higher amount of housing benefit. Hope sought a revision of V's housing benefit/council tax award and also helped her to apply for a Discretionary Housing payment (DHP) of £40 a week. The DHP was paid directly into V's rent account, which significantly helped to reduce her rent arrears.

Hope also made a fresh application for a Council Tax reduction for V. The application was successful and was applied to V's Council Tax account that financial year.

Hope further assisted V to make an affordable payment arrangement for repayment of the previous year's council tax arrears and the debt owed on three credit cards. All interest charges were frozen and no additional fees added to V's account.

Hope then helped V make an application for a grant that would help her to pay off the debt owed to her gas company and she also agreed to install a pre-payment meter.



Influential HCLC



Sir Henry with intern Soner, manager Sean, volunteer Katherine and Chair of Trustees Ian



Mayor of Hackney with HCLC team



Mayor of Hackney Philip Glanville

In 2016/17, HCLC continued to reach out, engage and campaign on legal, social and policy issues affecting our clients and local community.



Sir Henry Brooke at HCLC

SIR HENRY BROOKE VISITS HCLC

We were delighted to welcome Sir Henry Brooke to HCLC. Sir Henry, a former Lord Justice of Appeal, spent two hours at the Centre to talk to us about our work.

Sir Henry who, since retiring from the Court of Appeal, has become a well respected blogger on Access to Justice issues, wrote about his HCLC visit on his blog the next day:

"When I visited Hackney Law Centre yesterday and talked to their inspiring staff, I met Nathaniel Mathews, their senior housing officer who has been working in this field since 1993. I told him that my wife and I had felt a sense of despair when we read his recent blog about a typical day in his working life. Last night he sent me this message: "You were kind enough to read my

blog and say there was despair. Yes, but there is hope. That must conquer all." What a remarkable man! I too, live in hope, that at long, long last we may see some sensible change of policy towards some of the most vulnerable people in our society".

We were very pleased that Sir Henry was able to meet our brilliant intern Soner Koroglu; (pictured first from left) and day volunteer Katherine Oredugba (second from right) as well as HCLC's lawyers, staff and trustees (represented by HCLC Chair Ian Rathbone, pictured first from right).

The week after his visit, Sir Henry tweeted: "I was really impressed by the scale of the volunteer effort at @HackneyLawCentr last week - and their quality and obvious enthusiasm."

Commenting on Sir Henry's visit to the Centre, HCLC Chair Ian Rathbone said:

"It was an honour for Sir Henry to visit us and for him to demonstrate that, like many lawyers, he is very much concerned at the restrictions placed on access to justice by legal aid cuts. I know that he had felt a sense of despair about the situation but he also noted that Nathaniel Mathews, our senior solicitor, had pointed out there is also hope that 'must conquer all'. Sir Henry said he too, 'lives in hope, that at long long last we may see some sensible change of policy towards some of the most vulnerable people in our society'. I am glad he shares our view and I know the team were immensely encouraged by his visit."

Thank you very much again to Sir Henry for visiting Hackney Community Law Centre!



Sir Henry Brooke in conversation with the team

MAYOR OF HACKNEY VISITS HCLC

HCLC was very pleased to welcome Philip Glanville, the directly elected Mayor of Hackney, to the Centre in August 2017.

Mayor Glanville was elected in September 2016 after former Hackney Mayor Jules Pipe was appointed a Deputy Mayor of London under London Mayor Sadiq Khan.

As the directed elected Mayor of Hackney, Philip Glanville is responsible for the London Borough of Hackney's overall corporate strategy, financial management, and delivery of services by the Council. He also takes the lead within Cabinet on strategic housing, housing regeneration, property services, ICT, communications, devolution and policy.

HCLC is fortunate that the London Borough of Hackney (LBH) has been supportive of our work and the work of the wider Hackney advice sector. Thanks to LBH, HCLC has been able to continue providing a specialist immigration law and welfare benefits service despite immigration and welfare benefits' removal from the scope of legal aid following the 2012 Legal Aid Sentencing and Punishment of Offenders Act.

During his visit, Mayor Glanville heard from HCLC's housing, debt, welfare benefits, employment and immigration solicitors, caseworkers, interns and volunteers about the cases we'd been working on, the challenges we faced and the successes we'd been having. Homelessness was on the increase, with the majority of people who approach HCLC needing housing and homelessness advice. In terms of



immigration, HCLC had been receiving lots of referrals from organisations working with trafficked people and LGBT+ asylum seekers. Disability Benefits was also the growing area of our welfare benefits caseworker Marcin Brajta's caseload.

After his visit, Mayor Glanville tweeted *"Fascinating visit and timely reminder about why access to publicly funded independent legal advice is so vital"*.

He added *"Also proud that Hackney council partially funds them and that they have such a powerful local and national reputation"*.

Ian Rathbone, Chair of HCLC, commented: *"Hackney Community Law Centre is very grateful for Mayor Glanville's support. At a time when local authorities are under severe pressure and legal aid has also been curtailed, the Mayor recognising the importance of free and independent legal advice and representation for local people is a real boost to morale. We look forward to continuing to work with the Mayor to serve the residents of Hackney for the continuation of his mayoral term."*

HCLC'S KEVIN LONG WRITES FOR THE GUARDIAN NEWSPAPER

Following the terrible Grenfell Tower fire that took place in June 2017, HCLC solicitor Kevin Long wrote a piece for The Guardian newspaper on the tragedy. Kevin's article focused on the role of Homes and Communities Agency. Kevin argued that despite its official role as the UK's national housing regulator, the HCA had been all but silent on the Grenfell tragedy. Kevin's powerful piece was widely shared.



Pro Bono Report and Funders



Emma Rehal-Wilde
Debevoise Pro Bono Manager



Clinic student directors
Joanna Morris and Jeremy Harris

We would like to thank the 2016/17 volunteers of HCLC's Dalston Debt and Consumer and Disability Benefits Form Filling Clinics.

Particular thanks goes to **Emma Rehal-Wilde**, Pro Bono Manager at Debevoise and Plimpton LLP; **Jan Worsfold** at Debevoise and Plimpton LLP; **Laura Richards**, Senior Supervising Solicitor at BPP Law School; **Laura Jones**, Solicitor and Pro Bono Manager at BPP Law School; and **Stephen Llewellyn**, Counsel at Faegre Baker Daniels LLP.

Debevoise and Plimpton LLP

Roni Pacht, Sarah Hale, Ramsay McCulloch, Tom Jenkins, Thomas Matthews, John Crook, Mark McCloskey, Ceri Chave, Hilary Davidson, Emma Rehal-Wilde, Janice Worsfold, Niklas Elofsson, Gavin Chesney, Laurence Hanesworth, Sam Oladeinde, Jake Gradison, Rachel Stables, Ellie Mends, Charlotte Lelong, Tatyana Loze, Dominique Phipp.

Faegre Baker Daniels LLP

Stephen Llewellyn.

BPP Law School

Ailish Kelly; Alexander Cibulskis; Hester Cavaciuti; Bakhtawar Awan; Philip Novak; Michal Kubla; Stephen Sherafati; Bakhtawar Awan; Seung-Wook Lyeo; Hester Cavaciuti; Joanna Morris; Jeremy Harris; Duygu Karatay; Jason Chan; Duygu Karatay; Enis Hallaçoglu; Peal Agyemfra; Sharenia Kulendran; Rylin Koey; Georgia Short; Barbora Cechova; Duygu Karatay.



Disability Benefits form filling volunteers
Safae Abdellaoui and Zahraa Ghanem

Form Filling Clinic

Ramneek Sehmbhi; Hamza Shoaib; Pang Lumlum; Hamza Ahmed; James Mitchell; Safae Abdellaoui; Zahraa Ghanem; Anna Bella; Sher Min; Rose Bickerton; Sophie Lucas; Lizzy Sermol; Yi An Fong; Harriet Ho; Jo Carver; Kathryn Greenwood; Anna Bella Inglesi; Eve Iashak; Halima Parwsz.

London Borough of Hackney Libraries Services

Michelle Gardner, Pervez Chuhan, Anthony Kane, Catherine De Abaitua, Tina Sabz, Adrian Morris, Dharminder, Gilbert and Sharon.



Roni Pacht and Sarah Hale Debevoise
and Plimpton LLP volunteers

HCLC would like to express our thanks to the following funders.



Financial Report

Hackney Community Law Centre Statement of Financial Activities for the year ended 31 March 2017

		Unrestricted Funds	Designated Funds	Restricted Funds	2017 Total Funds	2016 Total Funds
INCOMING RESOURCES	Notes					
Incoming Resources from generated funds						
Donations and legacies	2	17,100	-	-	17,100	24,201
Incoming resources from charitable activities	4					
Provision of legal services and advice		453,676	-	117,340	571,016	565,294
Investment Income	3	82	-	-	82	252
Total incoming resources		470,858	-	117,340	588,198	589,747
RESOURCES EXPENDED						
Raising funds		1,050	-	-	1,050	
Charitable activities						
Provision of legal services and advice		398,432	-	89,840	488,272	521,496
Other costs		-	-	-	-	4,400
Total resources expended		399,482	-	89,840	489,322	525,896
NET INCOMING/(OUTGOING) RESOURCES		71,376		27,500	98,876	63,851
Transfer between funds	12	(200,000)	200,000	-	-	-
RECONCILIATION OF FUNDS						
Total funds brought forward		216,214	-	4,000	220,214	156,363
TOTAL FUNDS CARRIED FORWARD		87,590	200,000	31,500	319,090	220,214
		Unrestricted Funds	Designated Funds	Restricted Funds	2017 Total Funds	2016 Total Funds
FIXED ASSETS	Notes					
Tangible assets	8	6,547	-	2,000	8,547	13,731
CURRENT ASSETS						
Work in progress	9	11,723	100,000	-	111,723	71,817
Debtors	10	80,668	-	19,500	100,168	26,645
Cash at bank and in hand		19,394	100,000	10,000	129,394	143,141
		111,785	200,000	29,500	341,285	241,603
CREDITORS						
Amounts falling due within one year	11	(30,742)	-	-	(30,742)	(35,120))
NET CURRENT ASSETS		81,043	200,000	29,500	310,543	206,483
TOTAL ASSETS LESS CURRENT LIABILITIES		87,590	200,000	31,500	319,090	220,214
NET ASSETS		87,590	200,000	31,500	319,090	220,214
FUNDS						
Unrestricted funds	12				287,590	216,214
Restricted funds					31,500	4,000
TOTAL FUNDS					319,090	220,214

These financial statements have been prepared in accordance with the special provisions of Part 15 of the Companies Act 2006 relating to small charitable companies. The financial statements were approved by the Board of Trustees on 26 June 2017 and were signed on it behalf by: I Rathbone - Trustee

www.hclc.org.uk

Hackney Community Law Centre

8 Lower Clapton Road
London E5 0PD

DX 35465 Hackney 1

T 020 8985 5236

F 020 8533 2018

E admin@hclc.org.uk

www.hclc.org.uk

Telephone advice line:
020 8985 8364