



Solicitor of the year 2014

ANNUAL
REPORT
2014

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As I review the last year I am pleased to report that Hackney Community Law Centre (HCLC) helped over 3,000 people during 2014, notwithstanding the impact of ongoing cuts across all areas of legal aid, particularly in social welfare law.

IMPACT



HCLC intern Emma Brew-Riverson
with client



Ian
Rathbone

● In 2014, the national news agenda continued to be dominated by the pressures on public finances and deficit reduction. However, sadly for many residents and families who need and rely upon our services, their daily and weekly existence involves unrelenting demands on household finances as they juggle the impact of benefit caps, low wages and keeping the family home.

As ever, HCLC's staff have been ever more resilient in responding to the needs of service users with their usual spirit of positivity.

Key funding streams have helped us to continue serving the community:

- Our 'Sustainable Advice in Hackney' project, a partnership of advice providers in Hackney funded by the Big Lottery's 'Advice Services Transition Fund', launched in January 2014, to support the local advice sector in remaining resilient in the face of pressures on funding.
- The **London Borough of Hackney** continued to be the Centre's principal funder. The Council's consistent support for HCLC over many years means the borough has one of the strongest law centres in the country.
- Following the withdrawal of legal aid funding, access to employment advice has diminished since April 2013. In 2014, **Trust for London** continued to be strategically important to HCLC by supporting the delivery of our employment law advice service.

The **Friends of Hackney Community Law Centre** (which you can join if not already a member) has continued to provide another important source of grassroots funding and support and we continue to receive excellent pro bono help from a number of law firms and educational institutions, for which we are very grateful.

I would like to thank all HCLC's staff for their hard work and energy throughout 2014, particularly Sean Canning who has continued to be an excellent manager. Hackney Community Law Centre could also not achieve all that it does without its volunteers and so I would like to thank the impressive commitment and contribution of all our volunteers, including my colleagues on the Board of Directors and our marvellous group of Patrons.

Ian Rathbone, Chair

MANAGER'S REPORT

In 2014, Hackney Community Law Centre (HCLC) continued to respond to the needs of service users in the face of ongoing funding pressures on advice services.



● My colleagues continued to show an infinite capacity for resilience, ensuring that our services were able to adapt to a changing funding environment. HCLC continued to increase and maintain access for the community helping over 3,000 people through face to face advice, email advice, telephone advice and outreach sessions at our community Pop-Up clinics in the Hackney Central, Dalston CLR James and Lea Bridge libraries, as well as the Haringey Irish Centre.

In January 2014, we launched the HCLC led Big Lottery funded 'Sustainable Advice in Hackney' project and we were pleased to secure ongoing and additional funding from the London Borough of Hackney to support our increased caseload. Given the ongoing pressures on local authority funding by central government, this is testament to a mature understanding by the London Borough of Hackney that a publicly funded advice service is necessary to ensure that the rights of the individual can be enforced and protected against arbitrary decisions by public bodies.

Among our achievements in 2014 have been the following:

Our community Pop-Up clinics helped over 1,400 service users, working both independently and in collaboration with our volunteers and partners Debevoise and Plimpton LLP, Faegre Baker Daniels LLP, BPP Law School and the London Borough of Hackney Libraries Service.

In October 2014, our employment solicitor Diane Morrison won the 'in-house solicitor of the year' award at the Law Society Excellence Awards.

In November 2014, Miranda Grell, our Business Development Manager, was awarded the Law Centre Network's (LCN) 'Reita Clarke Memorial Award for Outstanding Achievement', which is awarded every year at LCN's annual conference in recognition of outstanding work by people within the Law Centres movement.

HCLC volunteers and intern programme continued to provide opportunities for people to develop their skills as well as help us to increase access for service users.

WHERE DO WE GO FROM HERE?

In alliance with our partners, we will continue to respond innovatively and develop new services which will help us tackle the impact of poverty and help people exercise their legal rights. I thank my colleagues (both paid staff and volunteers) for their staying power and commitment, and the HCLC Board and Patrons for their continued support.

Sean Canning, Manager

RESILIENCE



SPOTLIGHT ON JANUARY TO MARCH



HCLC intern
Subashini Nathan

HCLC JOINS NATIONAL LEGAL AID PROTEST

● In January, HCLC staff and interns joined barristers, solicitors and campaigners from all over the country to protest at Government proposals to make further cuts to criminal legal aid. It was the first time in the history of the Criminal Bar that practising barristers had taken industrial action. HCLC was represented at the protest by Hilton von Herbert, Senior Immigration Caseworker; Nathaniel Mathews, Senior Housing Solicitor; Subashini Nathan, former HCLC intern; and Miranda Grell, Business Development Manager. We were pleased to see Diane Abbott MP, our local Member of Parliament and a HCLC Patron, in attendance at the demonstration to show her support. HCLC Patron and human rights lawyer Louise Christian also joined the protest.



Miranda Grell, Louise Christian
& Hilton von Herbert



Diane Abbott MP &
Miranda Grell



Lord Low with Ian Rathbone

LORD LOW LAUNCHES 'SUSTAINABLE ADVICE IN HACKNEY'

● On Thursday the 23rd of January, representatives from Hackney's advice sector, the local council, sister law centres, corporate partners and advice agency volunteers, attended the official launch of the 'Sustainable Advice in Hackney' project, which is funded by the Big Lottery's 'Advice Services Transition Fund'. The launch took place at the Turkish and Kurdish Halkevi Community Centre.

The Big Lottery set up the nationwide Advice Services Transition Fund (ASTF) to enable local not-for-profit advice agencies to continue providing advice in their local communities and to also help the not-for-profit sector transform and adapt to a new funding environment. Hackney's ASTF Partnership is led by HCLC with partner organisations the Hackney Caribbean Elderly Organisation, East End Citizens Advice Bureau, Age UK East London, the Hackney Migrant Centre and City and Hackney Mind.

The launch event was chaired by Cllr Ian Rathbone, Chair of HCLC, with opening speeches made by Sean

“
... to ensure that more face to face, in-depth and intensive support could be targeted at those most in need.”

Canning, HCLC manager who acts as the Chair of the ASTF steering group; Jane Sterland, Big Lottery Fund Project Officer; Ian Lewis, Assistance Chief Executive of Hackney Council and HCLC Patron Lord Colin Low of Dalston CBE.

Lord Low had recently published the final report of the 'Low Commission on the Future of Advice and Legal Support', a year-long commission established to develop a strategy for access to advice and support on Social Welfare Law in England and Wales. As well as sharing six of the Commission's one hundred key findings with the audience, Lord Low



Audience at ASTF launch event

PROJECT



ASFT Project Partner Organisations
with Lord Low & Ian Lewis



called for greater use to be made of new technology and helplines for those who can manage to access these forms of communication and are not digitally excluded. Lord Low believed this would free up resources to ensure that more face to face, in-depth and intensive support could be targeted at those most in need.

Over the course of 2014, the ASTF project delivered a range of small and large training sessions for staff and volunteers from the local

Hackney advice sector as well as drawing up an advice sector specific volunteer recruitment strategy. The project also began work towards setting up a new Welfare Benefits Training 'Hub' and commissioned research into the future of advice in Hackney. A further highlight of the first year of the project were two 'Community Information Sessions' on 'Social Housing' and 'Family Law', which were delivered for the local community in Hackney Town Hall (see pg. 20 and 27).

HCLC's Tayyabah Ahmed



HCLC ADDRESS

WALTHAM FOREST

STREET HOMELESSNESS

SEMINAR

- In February, HCLC Housing Solicitors Wendy Pettifer and Tayyabah Ahmed joined Waltham Forest housing campaigners to examine the issue of street homelessness in the borough. Since April 2013, HCLC has been providing housing advice in Waltham Forest as there is currently no Law Centre in the borough. The homelessness seminar was hosted by the Christian Kitchen charity, which has provided food and assistance to Waltham Forest's homeless for over 25 years, and Voluntary Action Waltham Forest's Advice Providers Forum. Stella Creasy, the Member of Parliament for Walthamstow, also spoke at the event.



HCLC's Wendy Pettifer

2014 was challenging for HCLC's Housing Team but we lived to fight another year!



Nathaniel Mathews' client Nelson

● An example of success was the case of TH, a Jamaican migrant with two dependent children who had irregular immigration status. When HCLC met TH she was sleeping on a shop floor with her children as Hackney Social Services had refused to help her. TH's oldest daughter, who was 15, was pregnant and her best friend had recently been shot dead. HCLC threatened to bring judicial review proceedings and as a result, TH and her children were accommodated by Social Services and granted indefinite leave to remain in the UK.

In 2014, HCLC also continued to assist many clients with disrepair problems and possession proceedings and, in collaboration with the Hackney Migrant Centre, we also obtained funding from the Migrant Strategic Litigation Fund to conduct a research project into the standard of accommodation provided by Social Services Departments and its effect on vulnerable children. The aim of the research project is to try and protect children and their carers from destitution and homelessness.

HACKNEY HOUSING CASE STUDY

● At 5.30pm on a Thursday evening in April 2014, 15 people living in a ramshackle house in Lower Clapton were evicted with no notice. The police were present, which caused one tenant to become so frightened that she tried to drink bleach. No official paperwork was shown. All of the people evicted spent the night on the street. The tenants, mostly Colombian cleaners who had settled in the UK, had been living in a House in Multiple Occupation that had changed hands several times after the owner went bankrupt. The premises were dangerous. One floor had been condemned by the Council because of a dangerous gas boiler.

The new owners of the house took the residents to the local County Court to obtain possession and a deal was struck whereby a possession order was made but a clause was inserted that the order should not be enforced before the 23rd of April. However, in error the word "not" was missed out in the typed version of the order. It was also subsequently discovered that the chief negotiator for the tenants had been taking backhanders from the landlord, casting doubt on the deal.

The County Court Bailiff, who enforces most possession orders had written to the tenants advising them of an eviction date after the 23rd of April - in May - so they had time to plan. However, the new landlords then transferred the case to the High Court so that an official known as a 'Sheriff' could carry out the eviction instead. Unlike the Bailiff in the County Court, the Sheriff in the High Court does not usually give notice of evictions. The evicted tenants approached

HCLC and Nathaniel Mathews – assisted by HCLC intern Ervin Gjoleka - got to work the very next day taking instructions from the tenants in Spanish at the Council's Service Centre. Nathaniel then went straight to the High Court to get the Sheriff's eviction stopped.

The Judge who heard HCLC's application to set aside the eviction refused it but Nathaniel managed to renew it over the telephone that same evening. Close to midnight, Nathaniel finally managed to obtain an injunction readmitting the tenants back into the property.

The following Monday, Nathaniel had to simultaneously be in the County Court getting the possession order amended to add the word "not" and in the High Court getting the injunction to prevent the eviction renewed.

After Nathaniel managed to achieve both of these feats, the new landlords finally caved in and agreed to pay each tenant £1,500 if they left on the 23rd of April. With the money, all the tenants managed to find somewhere else to live.

The case illustrated numerous problems: the exploitation of migrant workers by unscrupulous landlords, the discrepancies between County Court and High Court enforcement procedures, and the nightmare of completing hundreds of pages of legal aid forms. It also showed that Hackney Community Law Centre is able to work with the Council successfully to stop illegal evictions and take our clients' very complicated instructions entirely in a foreign language (Spanish).

“

I wish to thank Nathaniel Mathews for the effective way in which he carried out his work. Before Nathaniel helped us we were not living like human beings – the landlords had cut off our lights, our toilet and water supply and then they evicted us illegally. Having our case taken by HCLC changed our lives. We need law centres to survive to help people who are the victims of injustice.

”

Testimonial from Nelson, one of the evicted
Columbian tenants HCLC helped

INJUSTICE



HOUSING REPORT

WALTHAM FOREST

HOUSING CASE STUDY

● A woman approached HCLC's Tayyabah Ahmed at Lea Bridge Road library in September 2014, as she had been found to be not in 'priority need' by Waltham Forest council. This was despite the fact that the client suffered from a number of medical conditions including severe osteoarthritis of her left leg, anxiety, depression, spastic hemiplegia with left talipes equinovarus and cerebral palsy.

HCLC and the client requested a review of the council's decision, however Waltham Forest Council continued to deny the client's medical conditions and went ahead with making arrangements to terminate her temporary accommodation.

Tayyabah Ahmed drafted and submitted grounds of appeal to the council. This led Waltham Forest council to concede that they had made a mistake in not accepting the women's request for a review and also made a mistake in not providing her with temporary accommodation pending the review's outcome.



Waltham Forest council then offered the woman temporary accommodation. Unfortunately, however, it was not suitable as it was out of London, miles away from the woman's family and medical support. The woman was unable to use the kitchen or bath in the temporary accommodation as they were on different floors with no lift, causing further problems to her health as she was also recovering from hip replacement surgery.

After Tayyabah Ahmed challenged the suitability of the temporary accommodation, the woman was moved into suitable temporary accommodation back in Waltham Forest. However, the council still continued to maintain that the woman was 'not in priority need'.

Tayyabah Ahmed submitted even more written submissions and the council finally accepted her legal arguments and agreed that the woman was in 'priority need' and was entitled to housing.

HARINGEY HOUSING

CASE STUDY

● F is a pensioner whose partner died suddenly. As well as suffering from stress related bereavement, F had a heart condition and severe arthritis. His partner was the sole secure tenant of a Haringey Homes flat and while she was alive refused to agree that F should have a legal right to "succeed" (inherit) her tenancy when she passed away. F's partner refused to help him prove that he lived with her in the year preceding her death and F's name did not appear on any Council documents relating to the property. After F's partner died, Haringey issued Possession proceedings against him and he approached HCLC. HCLC's Wendy Pettifer intervened on F's behalf and the case was settled just before it went to trial. Instead of becoming homeless, F was offered warden assisted accommodation.





DUTY SOLICITOR HOUSING CASE STUDY

● In September 2014, HCLC Housing Solicitor Tayyabah Ahmed was on duty at Clerkenwell & Shoreditch County Court as the Duty Solicitor and was called to assist a vulnerable client with mental health difficulties who had been evicted from two different addresses on the same day by Tower Hamlets Council. The first property was a one bedroom council flat the client had been offered and the second was a three bedroom flat whose tenancy he had “succeeded” (inherited the tenancy of) following the death of a close relative. The client had needed help to move out of the three bedroom flat, which was obviously too big, into the one bedroom flat but his council social

worker had not been available and so he ended up being evicted. The case was listed in the County Court as urgent as the client was now homeless and had been sleeping in a forest for four weeks. Due to the complexity of the case, the District Judge urged Tayyabah Ahmed to take on the case and see if she could assist the client in applying for re-entry to one of the properties. After a half day trial at which Tayyabah represented the client, making oral submissions and conducting cross examination of Tower Hamlets council, the court found that the council had acted unlawfully in applying for a bailiff’s warrant to be executed at both properties on the same date, as the client had a right to remain in one

of the properties due to the nature of his tenancy being ‘secure’.

The court found that the onus had been upon the council to ensure that the client had suitable accommodation to move into after it had decided that the 3 bedroom property was too big for him to live in alone. Furthermore, the court found that the 1 bedroom flat the council had offered the client was not suitable as it lacked basic amenities such as a kitchen. The judge ordered Tower Hamlets Council to carry out an assessment of the suitability of the 1 bedroom flat and also ordered it to pay the client’s legal costs.

SPOTLIGHT ON APRIL TO JUNE

TAYYABAH AHMED ATTENDS STELLA CREASY MP'S

'ASK THE EXPERT' EVENT



● In April, HCLC Housing Solicitor Tayyabah Ahmed attended a special 'Ask The Expert' event at the House of Commons hosted by Stella Creasy, the Member of Parliament for Walthamstow. Since April 2013, HCLC has been running a housing advice service in the London Borough of Waltham Forest, including a special weekly housing law drop-in service at Lea Bridge Library. Stella Creasy MP receives many requests for help with housing problems from her constituents and HCLC has taken on a number of the cases. At the 'Ask the Expert' event, Tayyabah Ahmed contributed to a discussion with



other experts and local residents affected by issues such as having to pay extortionate letting agents fees. As well as HCLC - and the housing charities Shelter and Crisis - Emma Reynolds MP, the Shadow Housing Minister, also spoke at the event.



LONDON LEGAL WALK 2014



● In May, HCLC participated in the 10th London Legal Walk organised by the London Legal Support Trust. The 10km walk saw more than 10,000 walkers proceed through London, on foot, to raise funds for charities and law centres. In 2014, HCLC walked with campaigning journalists 'The Justice Gap', whose editor Jon Robins is a HCLC Patron, and Sadiq Khan MP, the Shadow Justice Secretary. The Justice Gap team raised an amazing £1,600 for HCLC. We are indebted to Kim Evans of the Justice Gap for leading the team's fantastic fundraising efforts.

HCLC PARTICIPATES IN NATIONAL MAGNA CARTA DAY PROTEST

● In June, HCLC's Chair, staff, interns, board members and patrons took part in the Justice Alliance Campaign's 'Magna Carta Day' protest against further Government changes to legal aid. June the 15th 2014 marked the 799th anniversary of the signing of the Magna Carta and so to raise awareness of the current threat to the UK's rule of law as a result of the cuts to legal aid, hundreds of justice alliance supporters from across the country took to twitter to tweet their protest "justice selfies" or "jelfies". HCLC's protest was joined by our patron human rights solicitor Louise Christian.



The on-going impact of government driven cuts of welfare benefits continues to be the main driver of the issues affecting the work of HCLC's welfare benefits team.

● In 2014, we dealt with issues such as entitlement, eligibility, claimants' right to reside in the UK, benefits appeals and backdated payments claims. We also took on several cases where we helped clients to challenge decisions that they had been overpaid their benefit. The provision of representation at appeal tribunals also continued to be a key area of HCLC's work. At the time of writing, we await the roll-out of the Universal Credit which will replace all in-work benefits for working households.



WELFARE BENEFITS

CASE STUDY 1

● In September 2014, C, a young mother, who has since become wheelchair bound, attended HCLC's early morning welfare benefits drop-in. C had initially been refused Disability Living Allowance (DLA) even though she could only walk on crutches. C pursued her appeal unrepresented all the way to the Tribunal but even then she was only granted DLA for walking and only after it was accepted that she also had serious care needs. C had also been denied Employment and Support Allowance (ESA) for reasons that were unclear. C immediately applied for a review of the decision and was given assurances that a full review would take place. However, in September 2014, after waiting 8 weeks for the outcome of the review, C was told that she had missed her opportunity to chase the claim as she had not enquired within the 14 days required to request a review. This stunned C as she had been in regular contact with the Job Centre. HCLC's Diane Morrison took up C's case and wrote a detailed complaint to the job centre in early October 2014. As a result of Diane's efforts, C was awarded £2,160.30 in backdated payments covering June to October 2014. C was also awarded ESA, which included two further backdated payments of £227. The Job Centre also apologised.

WELFARE BENEFITS

CASE STUDY 2

● S had been in and out of prison for most of his adult life. He had several permanent physical and mental health ailments that came about as a result of his previous lifestyle. On release from prison in August 2013, HCLC's Nathaniel Mathews took up S's housing case and S was able to secure accommodation in the private sector. However, in the spring of 2014, S had his Employment and Support Allowance payments stopped after failing the 'Limited Capability for Work' assessment carried out by ATOS. Over the course of several months, while he awaited the outcome of an appeal he had lodged, S received no benefits at all. The Job Centre made several empty promises to pay what was due to him but repeatedly failed to credit his account with his benefits. S was forced to plead with friends and relatives for money to survive and was reduced to queuing up for food vouchers and hot meals. Eventually, S sought the help of the Law Centre and after our intervention he was awarded a backdated payment of £3,500. He now receives regular DLA and ESA payments.

HCLC'S TEAM IN 2014



HCLC's team in December 2014

STAFF LIST DECEMBER 2014

Staff Member	Job Title
Tayyabah Ahmed	Solicitor
Maureen Bello	Caseworker (locum p/t from 1.09.14)
Sean Canning	Manager (p/t)
Cherrill Connerty	Legal Secretary (p/t)
Bella Donnelly	Administrator
Miranda Grell	Business Development Manager
Hilton von Herbert	Immigration Caseworker
Marie Froya Hole	Trainee Solicitor
Nathaniel Mathews	Solicitor
Diane Morrison	Solicitor
Hope Olugbola	Debt Worker
Wendy Pettifer	Solicitor
Loretta Quildan	Finance Worker (p/t)
Kim Sin	Receptionist

“

Testimonial from 2014 intern Daniel Grütters

I came to HCLC hoping to get some hands-on legal experience in an organisation whose ideals I shared. My expectations were not only met, they were blown away. The organisation is filled with passionate, committed and extremely capable individuals, yet they are all overloaded with work and are therefore always looking for someone to lend them a hand. While I worked mostly with Nathaniel Mathews, I also assisted Hilton von Herbert, Wendy Pettifer and Marie Froya Hole. Without a doubt, my most memorable time was working with Nathaniel, Hilton and our barrister on the case of a Vietnamese refugee. While the client had been granted her leave to remain, her child - who had been born in the UK - had not been due to abysmal failure by the Home Office. The result was that our client was not considered a mother for the purposes of housing and was therefore at imminent risk of being evicted. With our client and her infant child's homelessness looming over us, Nathaniel, Hilton and I used all possible legal ways to challenge the Home Office in the Courts and, eventually, we won the case.

”



Daniel Grütters

INTERNS AND VOLUNTEERS



ISHAQ SHAH

Ishaq Shah became a HCLC intern in January 2014. Ishaq worked exclusively with HCLC's Senior Immigration Advisor Hilton von Herbert on immigration and asylum cases. Ishaq says he enjoyed working on HCLC's immigration cases – despite their difficulty – because of the relief he saw the clients experience when they found out that their immigration problems had been resolved. Before Ishaq came to HCLC, he worked at the Home Office as a Senior Case Worker. He then decided to study law and attended London Metropolitan University where he obtained his Graduate Diploma in Law and his Legal Practice Course qualification. After finishing his internship at HCLC, Ishaq was offered a training contract with CK Solicitors.



ERVIN GJOLEKA

Ervin Gjoleka also became a HCLC intern in January 2014, assisting Senior Housing Solicitors Nathaniel Mathews and Wendy Pettifer with their housing law cases. Ervin answered calls on HCLC's telephone advice line, prepared letters of advice to clients, carried out home visits and filed documents at court. Ervin was heavily involved in assisting Nathaniel Mathews represent fifteen Colombian tenants who were evicted from their shared accommodation – illegally – all on the same day. Thanks to Nat and Ervin's interventions, the Colombians were awarded compensation for the illegal eviction (see Housing Report, pg. 8). Before Ervin came to HCLC, he had completed his Legal Practice Course at the College of Law where he specialised in private client law, family law and commercial law. Ervin also volunteered with the Citizens Advice Bureau in Camden. Since leaving HCLC, Ervin has begun working as a trainee solicitor at TV Edwards.



JORRIT DONNER-WITTKOPF

We are delighted to report that Jorrit Donner-Wittkopf, one of our star volunteers who began volunteering with HCLC two years ago, aged 14, did extremely well in three of the GCSE exams. Jorrit, who's now nearly 16, was entered for GCSE exams in Latin, Music and German a full year ahead of him completing Year 11 at school, which is the usual time for taking GCSE exams. We are extremely proud to report that despite being entered for his exams early, Jorrit was awarded A*s in all three subjects. HCLC is delighted for and very proud of this budding future legal aid lawyer.



CAROLYN ENTWISTLE

Carolyn Entwistle joined HCLC as a volunteer in January 2014 working with Marie Froya-Hole on welfare benefits cases. Carolyn, who was employed as the Administrator to Garden Court Chambers at the time, is studying on the Bar Professional Training Course at the College of Law.

A Big Thank You to all of HCLC's 2014 interns and volunteers:

Ishaq Shah
Ervin Gjoleka
Imogen Proud
Carolyn Entwistle
Moggol Bafo
Michael Robb

Shade Fayemiwo
Elena Mitu
Efe Ilguy
Kelly Boujoy
Phoebe Wragg
Bob Matheson

Emma Brew-Riverson
Andrew McGowan
Rika Calvin
Jenny Papworth
Lavinia Wasserman
Samuel Moodey

Daniel Grütters
Grania Douglas
Lisa Connerty
Simon Bowen

HCLC'S TEAM IN 2014

Board of Directors in 2014

Lawrence Abe
Ruth Appleton
Dwayne Fields
Elizabeth Ladipo
Victor McAllister
Andrew Wingfield
Mary Rachel McCabe
Deniz Oguzkanli
Adenike Ojo
Ian Rathbone
Megan Redmond

BOARD MEMBERS



ANDREW WINGFIELD PROVIDES VENUE FOR HCLC 'AWAY-DAY'

In May, HCLC held our 2014 Away-Day at the London headquarters of Société Générale Bank. The purpose of the away day was to discuss the way the Centre runs, to share ideas, and to develop a strategies for the future. HCLC staff are grateful to HCLC Board Member Andrew Wingfield, the head of Société Générale's Group Legal department, for providing us with the use of Société Générale's facilities for the day.



MARY-RACHEL MCCABE SECURES 'PUPILLAGE' AT DOUGHTY STREET CHAMBERS

In early August, HCLC celebrated our former intern - now Board Member - Mary-Rachel McCabe's pupillage offer from the prestigious Doughty Street chambers, to begin in October 2015. Mary-Rachel is currently a part-time student on the Bar Professional Training Course (BPTC) at the City Law School. After completion of the BPTC, a BPTC graduate is required to obtain a 'pupillage', a form of barrister's apprenticeship, in order to fully qualify as a barrister. HCLC is delighted that Mary-Rachel has secured a pupillage at Doughty Street Chambers and wishes her a long and successful career at the Bar.



HCLC CHAIR IAN RATHBONE SHORTLISTED FOR GUARDIAN NEWSPAPER TRUSTEE OF THE YEAR AWARD

In November, HCLC was very pleased to see Ian Rathbone, our hardworking Chair of HCLC's Board of Directors, shortlisted for the Guardian Newspaper's 'Trustee of the Year' award. Ian has been a HCLC trustee for 18 years, becoming Chair 5 years ago. Around that time, HCLC was threatened with closure. Ian worked day and night to keep HCLC open so ordinary Hackney people could continue to receive access to justice. Though not legally trained, Ian is hands on with clients who've experienced domestic violence, genocide and torture, are severely disabled or have been illegally evicted. Though Ian did not win the Trustee of the Year award, everyone at HCLC is extremely proud of his achievement in being shortlisted and thanks all those who voted for him.



HCLC away-day at

Societe Generale London office



HCLC team celebrates

Mary-Rachel McCabe's pupillage offer

PATRONS



LORD LOW OF DALSTON CBE WINS LIBERTY HUMAN RIGHTS AWARD

In December, HCLC Patron Lord Low of Dalston won campaigning charity Liberty's 'Human Rights Campaign of the Year' Award. Age UK nominated Lord Low for the Award because he has championed human rights and the protection of disabled and vulnerable people for over four decades. In May 2014, Lord Low led a campaign in the House of Lords which extended greater human rights protection to hundreds of thousands of older and disabled people. The Care Bill – now the Care Act - changed the law to protect adults at risk of abuse and neglect. Lord Low's amendments to the bill provided an opportunity for Parliament to correct an anomaly which excluded some people receiving care from protection under the Human Rights Act 1998. Well done, Lord Low!



JON ROBINS WRITES NEW BOOK ABOUT MISCARRIAGE OF JUSTICE VICTIM

In October, HCLC Patron Jon Robins held a special event in Parliament to launch his new book *'The First Miscarriage of Justice: The 'Unreported and Amazing' Case of Tony Stock'*. The book covers the case of Tony Stock, a man convicted of a 1970 robbery and sentenced to 10 years in prison despite overwhelming evidence to suggest that he had not been present at the scene of the crime. Over subsequent decades, despite Tony Stock's case going to appeal four times, his conviction still stands. Jon Robins wrote the book to highlight this probable miscarriage of justice and Jon is working with Mr Stock's family, lawyers and other miscarriage of justice campaigners to try and convince the Criminal Cases Review Commission to refer Mr Stock's case back to the Court of Appeal for a fresh appeal. Sadly, Tony Stock – who never stopped protesting his innocence - passed away in 2012.



JEAN LAMBERT MEP RE-ELECTED TO THE EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT

In May, the European Parliament elections were held and HCLC welcomed the re-election of our patron Jean Lambert MEP. Jean Lambert has been a Green Member of the European Parliament since 1999. Jean has campaigned tirelessly on behalf of vulnerable asylum seekers and refugees as well as the London voluntary sector. We are so pleased that Jean will have a further five years in the European Parliament to carry on her good work.



TUNDE OKEWALE WINS UK DIVERSITY LEGAL AWARD

In November, HCLC Patron Tunde Okewale was awarded the 'Diversity Champion' award at the Black Solicitors' Network's annual UK Diversity Legal Awards. Tunde, who is a barrister at Doughty Street Chambers, grew up in Hackney and was the first person in his family to go to University. Tunde founded the 'Urban Lawyers' organisation to support and encourage young people from non-traditional backgrounds to enter the legal profession. Well done, Tunde!



Hackney Community Law Centre 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

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

HCLC's Immigration Department, run single-handedly by Senior Immigration Caseworker Hilton von Herbert.



● Hilton continues to endure the effects of cuts to Legal Aid funding following the introduction of the Legal Aid Sentencing and Punishment of Offenders Act (LASPO) 2012. The 14th of May 2014 then saw the Immigration Bill receive Royal Assent and become the Immigration Act 2014, which in summary, introduced some draconian provisions, including a pilot policy to disqualify people waiting to be granted leave to enter or leave to remain in the UK, from entering into a residential tenancy agreement. Landlords now have a duty to check a person's immigration status and may be fined £3,000 per adult if they rent their property to a person who does not have leave to remain in the UK. The Immigration Act 2014 also introduces further limits to an individual's rights of immigration appeal and prohibits banks from opening accounts for people without leave to remain in the UK. HCLC anticipates some of these provisions will adversely affect a large number of our clients and we continue to monitor the Act's likely effects going forward.

In 2014, HCLC also noted an increased demand from a large cross-section of the community for specialist immigration advice and representation as a large number of cases are now excluded from the scope of legal aid. As a result, the majority of those clients, not being able to afford to pay for their cases privately, are now seeking help from alternative sources such as local places of worship and MPs' and GPs'

IMMIGRATION CASE STUDY

● Prior to instructing the Law Centre, N, our Tanzanian client, a student, had submitted an 'in-time' application in 2003 to remain in the UK as a student and in 2005 submitted further representations based on Articles 3 and 8 of the European Convention on Human Rights (ECHR). N used the correct Home Office form for the time to complete his application. The application remained outstanding for 8 years until 2013 when HCLC received a letter from the United Kingdom Border Agency (UKBA) returning N's application as unprocessed because "the current version of the correct specified form must be used."

HCLC lodged an immediate judicial review under the following grounds: Firstly, that UKBA had delayed making a decision about N's application for over 8 years and this delay could in no way be attributed to N because throughout the period whilst his application remained outstanding, N had kept in constant contact with the Home Office and complied with all their requests for information and documents.

Secondly, that the Home Office had written a letter to N advising him that it is the Home Office's "decision to grant you leave in line with the current Immigration Rules" thereby giving N a legitimate expectation that he would be granted leave to remain.

Thirdly, the Home Office's reason for returning N's application as: "The application or claim must be made

using the current version of the correct specified form" was totally unreasonable and unacceptable considering the fact that the Home Office had had the application in their possession for 8 years.

Fourthly, we asserted on N's behalf that at the time when the application was submitted in 2005, Home Office policy was that applications made on ECHR Grounds (certainly Article 3 applications) did not necessarily have to be made using a prescribed application form and did not require payment of an application fee.

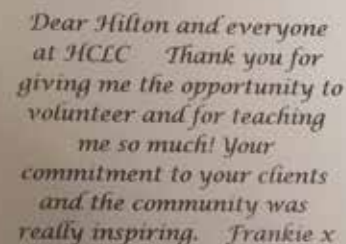
Finally, we submitted that the decision to return N's application unprocessed effectively breached N's Human Rights especially his Right to a Private and Family Life under Article 8 of the ECHR. N had suffered 8 years of detriment living his life in limbo without any recognised immigration status. Had N's application(s) been dealt with in a timely manner by the Home Office, he could have qualified for and been granted Indefinite Leave to Remain and/or British Citizenship by the time the Home Office returned his unprocessed application in 2013.

HCLC won N's Judicial Review and the Home Office subsequently granted him Indefinite Leave to Remain in the UK. N has now been able to pick up the pieces of his life and has started a University Degree course.

Our gratitude goes to Phillip Nathan, Barrister at Landmark Chambers, who worked late into the night on occasion to help N win his case.

surgeries. In October, this increased demand moved Hilton von Herbert to deliver a free immigration training session for local clergy in a bid to try and alleviate some of the pressures they are experiencing (see pg. 27).

We are delighted that in November the Lord Chancellor's office appointed Hilton an Independent Funding Adjudicator for the Legal Aid Agency



Dear Hilton and everyone at HCLC Thank you for giving me the opportunity to volunteer and for teaching me so much! Your commitment to your clients and the community was really inspiring. Frankie x

I AM AN IMMIGRANT

“FOR 13 YEARS I HAVE
BEEN CHAMPIONING
HUMAN RIGHTS
AND FIGHTING
FOR JUSTICE”

NAME: S CHELVAN

COUNTRY OF ORIGIN: SRI LANKA

OCCUPATION: BARRISTER, N05 CHAMBERS

LEGAL AID BARRISTER OF THE YEAR 2014

NOXENOPHOBIA.ORG

CAMPAIGN BY



MOVEMENT
AGAINST
XENOPHOBIA



JOINT COUNCIL FOR THE WELFARE OF IMMIGRANTS

MONEY RAISED
THROUGH

CROWD FUNDING

KEY DONATIONS BY



SPOTLIGHT ON JULY TO SEPTEMBER

SOCIAL HOUSING COMMUNITY

INFORMATION SESSION



● In July, the ASTF Sustainable Advice in Hackney project led by HCLC (read about the project's launch on pg. 6) hosted its first Community Information Session on social housing. The session was chaired by HCLC Chair Ian Rathbone.

More than 70 people from across the Hackney advice sector and local community attended. John Isted, Projects and Legislation Team leader for the London Borough of Hackney spoke about the London Borough of Hackney's Lettings Policy, which he wrote, and Asma Bhol, Medical Assessment Team leader at the London Borough of Hackney explained how her team makes decisions about a person's eligibility for social housing based on medical priority.

Finally, Nathaniel Mathews, Senior Housing Solicitor at Hackney Community Law Centre provided some useful practical exercises for the audience to work through in order to help them better assess a person's eligibility for social housing. All the exercises were made available on the Sustainable Advice in Hackney project website (www.hackneyadvice.org.uk).



Nathaniel Mathews, Asma Bhol and John Isted

FULHAM AND PUTNEY HALF MARATHON



● In August, HCLC's Diane Morrison successfully completed the Fulham and Putney riverside half marathon, as part of efforts to raise funds for HCLC and the London Legal Support Trust (LLST). LLST raises funds for charities and advice agencies who give free legal advice to people who can't afford to pay. The half marathon, a two lap course with a scenic riverside route, started at Barn Elms Sports Centre, crossed Putney Bridge, proceeded to Craven Cottage, passed over Hammersmith Bridge and headed back down towards Putney. Diane, who has run the London Marathon a whopping 4 times, completed the half marathon in an impressive 2 hours 19 minutes and 49 seconds and contributed to the LLST team raising over £3,000.



HCLC HOSTS USA

STUDENTS FOR SUMMER

PLACEMENTS

● Andrew McGowan (above) volunteered with HCLC for a month in the summer of 2014. Andrew is a PhD physics student who recently converted to studying law at the University of Richmond School of Law.

Over the course of his internship with HCLC, Andrew worked closely with Senior Housing Solicitor Wendy Pettifer and was an invaluable member of our team. As well as his academic interests in physics and law, Andrew possessed a keen interest in history and constitutional issues.



● Rika Calvin (above) joined HCLC as a summer intern, working predominantly with Senior Housing Solicitor

Nathaniel Mathews on housing law cases and some welfare benefits' cases. Rika comes from Milwaukee in the US state of Wisconsin where she is currently studying for her Bachelor of Science degree in Political Science & Philosophy at the University of Wisconsin Stevens Point. Rika shadowed Nathaniel at client appointments in the office and at court and also observed an immigration tribunal appeal at York House. Rika also helped Nathaniel to draft letters and put together draft bundles for court hearings. Rika says she was particularly struck by London's diversity and the fact that Londoners start and finish their working days later than in the United States. During her HCLC internship, Rika told us that she had really enjoyed eating Chicken Rogan Josh in London's many top quality Indian restaurants.

HCLC's employment team assists people with many aspects of employment law. These include unpaid wages, dismissal, discrimination, redundancy, holiday pay, breach of contract, grievances, and compromise agreements.



EMPLOYMENT CASE STUDY 1

● M attended HCLC's weekly employment law drop in session. M was a Ghanaian national with leave to remain in the UK. M had been employed by a cleaning and social care agency since 2006. However, one day, in December 2013, M attended her usual shift for work only to be told that there was no work available for her. Her name had not been included on the rota. M went to the agency's office as soon as possible after the Christmas break only to be told there that they believed that her immigration visa was fake and so she was no longer eligible to work for them. The employment agency declined to examine M's up-to-date visa and withheld her previous week's wages of £235.13 were without

explanation. M approached HCLC. Hilton von Herbert looked at M's visa and determined that M had no restrictions on her right to work in the UK. He also said that it was very easy for employers to make enquiries of the UK Border Agency to determine the status of a worker. HCLC's Diane Morrison wrote to the employment agency but they refused to reinstate M or pay her outstanding wages so Diane then submitted an ET1 claim to the Employment Tribunal. As soon as the ET1 claim was forwarded to the employment agency they contacted HCLC, eager to settle the claim and have the matter withdrawn. They also offered to reinstate M (which she refused as she had found another job by then) and pay M her outstanding wages.

EMPLOYMENT CASE STUDY 2

● O worked for a large national chain of betting shops. He had worked there for just over two years when a client, who usually staked large bets, came in and placed two bets, one of which was erroneously entered into the till by O as a lesser amount. O's employer accused him of having under rung the bets for personal gain and disciplinary action was taken against him. Following that accusation, a second allegation was made against O regarding another large bet placed by a different customer. O's employer said that O had not requested prior authorisation before processing the second bet. O responded that he had asked his colleague, who had been working with him at the time, to telephone their superiors to seek

clearance. O's colleague had told him that authorisation had been granted when in fact it had not. O was suspended but surprisingly his colleague remained in post. O approached HCLC while awaiting the outcome of his internal appeal hearing. O told HCLC that his area manager believed his claims that the second punter may have been trying to scam the shop. O's employer used delaying tactics and refused to make a final decision about whether to terminate O's employment. However, just as the final deadline for HCLC to lodge O's employment tribunal claim approached, O's employer withdrew their decision to dismiss O and reinstated him as manager of the betting shop.

HCLC's Debt and Financial Inclusion services focus on helping to change people's lives. We assist people to make the most of their money through their own efforts and by working with others. We help the most vulnerable to address their money management arrangements and stabilise their finances. We also help people to access mainstream financial services including banks and credit unions. In 2014, HCLC's award winning 'Dalston Pop- Up' clinic continued to supplement our in-house debt services (See pg. 31).

DEBT CASE STUDY 1

● Maryline and John were a couple with two dependent children. They owed £5,509 in late rent payments and also had council tax arrears of £1,020. Mary and John were summonsed to court. On top of their rent and council tax debt, John had two credit cards which had reached their limit, totalling £7,000. John had also lost his full time employment and been unemployed for over 7 months during which time he did not claim Job Seekers Allowance. Maryline is a registered carer for one of their children who is disabled. John had just started a part time job when the couple were referred to HCLC for help. It turned out that the couple's rent arrears were due to their housing benefit being cancelled as a result of their failure to provide up to date information about their income when John lost his full time job and

didn't claim Job Seekers Allowance. The couple's debt situation was further compounded when they began to use their credit card for daily living costs and were not in a position to make any repayments. With HCLC debt caseworker Hope Olugbola's assistance, the couple successfully appealed the Housing benefit decision and received a backdated Housing Benefit payment of £5031.54 and a £1,200 Council Tax reduction. Hope also advised John to claim the working tax credit he was entitled to. Hope further negotiated an affordable payment arrangement with the couple's creditors based on realistic budgeting. The arrangement was made on condition that all interest charges were frozen. Due to Hope's assistance, Maryline and John did not have to go to court.

DEBT CASE STUDY 2

● Anthony had recently separated from his wife. He was a temp agency worker in multiple debt caused by his irregular income and over subscription to credit and store cards.

Anthony's debts were over £14,000, which included debt for rent arrears and Council Tax. Anthony had been in rent arrears for about five years and had given up hope of escaping from his cycle of debt. Anthony also felt overwhelmed due to the breakdown of his marriage.

HCLC's Hope Olugbola advised Anthony on his options. Anthony agreed to file for a Debt Relief Order (DRO) and Hope assisted him with the application. The DRO application was approved and Anthony's creditors were notified. Bearing no change in his circumstance during the one year moratorium period, Anthony should be discharged from all his listed debts.



SPOTLIGHT ON
OCTOBER TO DECEMBER

DIANE WINS LAW SOCIETY EXCELLENCE AWARD!

● In October, HCLC solicitor Diane Morrison beat off nationwide competition to become the winner of the 2014 Law Society Excellence Awards 'Solicitor of the year – in house'. The winners of the 2014 Law Society Excellence Awards were selected by a panel of senior industry experts and represented the brightest and best talent the legal profession has to offer.

From part-time typist to qualified solicitor, the judges said Diane is an inspirational in-house solicitor renowned for her exceptional work and client care skills.

Diane grew up on the Caribbean island of Trinidad. When she was 16, her 'A' Level English teacher, noticing Diane's flair for English and her analytical mind, encouraged Diane to become a lawyer. In July 1990, when Trinidad suffered an attempted coup d'état, Diane came to Britain. She worked as a typist in the day while studying for her Law Degree (LLB) and Legal Practice Course (LPC) qualification at night. In May 2005, Diane joined HCLC as a part-time typist and neither she nor HCLC has looked

back since. It was a source of deep pride, not only for Diane but also for the local East London community that HCLC serves, when she finally qualified as a solicitor in 2012.

In her short time as a solicitor, Diane has made an impact that would have taken other solicitors many more years. With a background as a volunteer advisor at the Citizens Advice Bureau (*where she still volunteers*), Diane is HCLC's 'go to' advisor on anything and everything that comes through the Law Centre's doors. As well as managing her growing solicitor caseload, Diane runs HCLC's **telephone advice line**, answering over 50 telephone queries a week from members of the public. Since 2012, she has also spearheaded HCLC's weekly **Community Pop-Up Shop advice service** which she delivers in a local Hackney library. Diane has now provided advice to nearly 800 local residents since the service began and the Pop-Up was shortlisted for a Law Society Excellence Award in 2012.

When Diane set up HCLC's **volunteer and intern programme** she told us she was doing so because she remembered

how hard it was for her, as a law student with no family support or personal legal connections, to qualify as a solicitor. She said that if she were ever in a position to help other people qualify as lawyers then she would. Diane's willingness to 'give something back' has resulted in hundreds of law students being given the opportunity to gain practical legal experience at HCLC and take their first step on the legal career ladder.

However, Diane is also – and most importantly – a **phenomenal solicitor**. Due to the meticulous way in which she prepares her cases, Diane has so far won 4 out of 5 of her hearings at the first-tier social security tribunal. In January 2012, before Diane had even fully qualified as a solicitor, she began to build on her formidable skills as a **social welfare lawyer** by taking over the running of **HCLC's employment law service**. As a result, Diane is now gaining a solid reputation in the solicitor community for her exceptional work and client care skills in employment law too.

Diane Morrison is a true community lawyer, fighting for those in desperate need who cannot afford legal representation. We strongly believe that it is because Diane Morrison chose to join HCLC and qualify as a solicitor that vulnerable clients have a bright future.



Reacting to the news that she had won the Excellence Award Diane Morrison said:

"I am really pleased to win this award. It still hasn't really sunk in. I feel that the award is a recognition of Hackney Community Law Centre's (HCLC's) hard work over many years. At HCLC, we have to do so much with so little for so many. I am so grateful for the support I have received from my colleagues past and present. I'd particularly like to thank the judges for their decision. It will inspire me to continue working in social welfare law and inspire the whole HCLC team to continue providing access to justice".

Three of the clients Diane has helped – Ashley, Keithley and Christine – made statements in support of her award nomination. Keithley (pictured) told the judges:

"I worked as a cabbie for six years then I was diagnosed with prostate cancer. I was off for two months but when I came back to work my employers sacked me. They said there was no job anymore but I know that wasn't true as they had hired a new person to replace me. They sacked me at Christmas and it was planned. Other people knew I was going to be sacked before I did. Some of my other colleagues made monkey noises around me. I was under so much stress working there. When they sacked me they offered me only two weeks' pay. They didn't tell me that I should get legal advice about the offer. As it happened over Christmas, and I had no money, I

felt forced to just accept it. I went to Hackney Community Law Centre and Diane took on the case. She wrote to the company for me but they didn't respond so she helped me to lodge an Employment Tribunal claim. The company had been making itself bankrupt every two years so every employee had to keep being reemployed on new contracts. I felt very badly treated. I was a loyal worker. I had always been on time. Diane really prepared the case well for me. She listened properly to what I had to say. She's a good lady. If the Law Centre hadn't helped me I wouldn't have been able to bring the case. I was still recovering from the cancer and there is no way I could have afforded private lawyers. I feel so much better now that the case has been dealt with. I have got justice. I am very pleased and grateful Diane was my solicitor".



AT THE HIGHEST LEVEL

HCLC Chair Ian Rathbone said: "Diane has worked for the law centre nine years and in that time has quietly made a significant and important impact on all we do. Her story is very encouraging to anyone looking to become a lawyer but lacking confidence or feeling they don't have the wherewithal. Diane has shown that dedicated lawyers of high calibre can work in such difficult environments because they passionately believe in access to justice for poor people, and as such can still compete at the highest level with other lawyers around the country – and be judged by their peers as worthy of the highest accolade".



Following the awards ceremony, Matt Sullivan, Head of Business Development and Consultancy at the Law Society, visited HCLC's offices to present Diane with her award formally. Matt said: "Diane is a shining example of an innovative lawyer. The judges were struck by Diane's irrepressible quest for excellence and her powerful sense of civic and moral duty".

High praise for Diane as she picks up her award

Named prestigious In House Solicitor of the Year

by Shoshana Wynn
shoshana.wynn@hclc.co.uk

A solicitor who helps some of Hackney's most vulnerable residents has been named the best in her field as a high-profile ceremony.

Diane Morrison, a solicitor at the Hackney Community Law Centre in Lower Clapton Road, was bestowed the honour of In House Solicitor of the Year at the Law Society Excellence Awards on the most prominent night of the legal calendar.

Impressed

The event, hosted by BBC journalist Michael Buerk, saw more than 600 turn up at the Park Plaza Hotel in Westminster to celebrate outstanding achievements of others in their profession.



OCTOBER 23 - 26, 2014 THE VOICE 17

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THE PEOPLE'S LEGAL EAGLE

The remarkable rise of a typist who became the Law Society's Solicitor of the Year

experience allowed her to fill the role of a paralegal at the law centre in 2006 and advanced to a training contract in 2010.

"This was at the time when the legal profession was being rocked by the legal aid cuts," she explains. "The law centre had suffered a huge loss of staff and was on the verge of closing. I had to get my private life and everything else I was doing on hold. I was missing the phone advice line five mornings a week and then the court work and writing checks in the afternoon. I was sometimes doing the cleaning and putting out the bins and then doing evening pro bono advice programmes. I was basically working seven days a week just to keep up."

ACCESS

She adds: "I know that we but with the government's fixed fee rules, which means no matter how many hours they spend on a case they get the same payment, they just cannot afford to have the ethics that we have, as a charity, of going the extra mile."

"And now with limits on the number of cases you can take per year and on the types of cases – employment, benefits, debt – the same people you used to support last year you have to turn away today."

HCLC chair Ian Rathbone believes Morrison is a role model.

"Diane has worked for the law centre for nine years and in that time has quietly made a significant and important impact on all we do," he says. "Her story is very encouraging to anyone looking to become a lawyer but lacking confidence or feeling they don't have the wherewithal. Diane justice for poor people, and as such can still compete at the highest level with other lawyers around the country – and be judged by their peers as worthy of the highest accolade."

The 2014 Law Society Excellence Awards recognise outstanding achievement in areas such as pro bono, marketing and communications, diversity, client service and business. The winners were selected by a panel of senior industry experts and announced by BBC broadcaster Michael Buerk at a special awards ceremony.

Morrison, who now runs an in-house programme to help those who are struggling like the debt to become qualified, says aspiring black lawyers should not be discouraged by the lack of diversity in the sector.

She says: "Yes, there is a

24 FEATURE

facebook.com/hackneylawcentre

Person and plate: star solicitor Diane Morrison picks up where Legal Aid left off

Benjamin Mortimer meets the former typist who has become the pride of Hackney Law Centre

Diane Morrison's a keen advocate of taking a packed lunch to work, but occasionally drops in to Dreyfus Café on Lower Clapton Road.

It's conveniently close to the offices of Hackney Community Law Centre, where Morrison works as the best in-house solicitor in the UK – an accolade recently bestowed on her by the Law Society.

"That's what they say, yes," Morrison acknowledges with a laugh as she joins the Hackney Citizens for tenants' rights and housing advice.

"I thought, I'm just going to get on with my work, award or not – other people have won awards."

Morrison had given up hope of ever practising by the time she joined the Community Law Centre as a typist in 2006 – and actually considered her degree subject in case her prospective employers suspected she was really after a training contract. She judged that "they would see my degree and think 'oh no, she's going to start

Morrison is worried for the future. "You have judges now who are saying to applicants 'you need to get legal advice so I'm adjourning the case' – it's not working."

In social welfare law, Morrison points at her shoes. "There are six quid in Primark. It's not at all glamorous. We have solicitors at the Law Centre with 20 years' experience who are just about on £30,000 a year" – a company lawyer with equivalent experience could expect to be earning comfortably over three times that amount.

Legal Aid for Morrison's own areas of expertise – debt and employment law – has been cut entirely, and her work at the Law Centre is dependent on charitable funding, principally from the social welfare charity Trust for London.

She says vulnerable groups such as immigrants and disabled people are being most affected by the cuts, with doctors' surgeries, even, picking up some of the work as patients report on their circumstances.

"GPs now are getting frustrated, saying 'this person needs this advice', and you have Social Action for Health, or Mind, having to take on that additional burden."

Changes to the way employment tribunals are funded – including the introduction of a charge for employers to bring a tribunal for unfair dismissal – are weighing the system against employers, in Morrison's view.

Hand in hand with this is the way advice is now divided up into distinct areas, handled by people who aren't legal professionals able to deal with the whole person.

"If you have a benefit problem, that's going to affect your housing situation and that could lead to a debt problem. We have people who can work on the benefit problem but they can't do anything about the other problems."

"These shoes are six quid from Primark. My job is not at all glamorous"

It's long hours in the Law Centre, with Morrison working well beyond what she's obliged to do.

"Last night I left after 10 o'clock. It depends on what's going on. For me it's usual but it's not our set hours, which are 10am to 5.30 in the evening."

Survival mode

Even the Law Centre needs to be business-minded, taking on cases which can be paid for out of Legal Aid.

"You have to earn money because without money you won't survive," as Morrison puts it. Nevertheless, the Centre accepts clients from all over London, outside similar centres

Honoured Diane Morrison at Dreyfus Café. Photograph: Jason Piller

had had time to listen.

It was Matthew Bloorgate who

Course and quality as a solicitor in

October 2012. The Law Society award

"We have solicitors with 20 years' experience who are just about on a £30,000

SPOTLIGHT ON OCTOBER TO DECEMBER

FAMILY LAW COMMUNITY INFORMATION SESSION



● In November, the Sustainable Advice in Hackney project (read more about the project launch on pg. 6) hosted a second Community Information Session, this time on Family Law. 85 people from across the local community and Hackney advice sector attended the session, which took place at Hackney Town Hall. The Sustainable Advice in Hackney project, led by HCLC, decided to put on a session covering family law as since the removal of legal aid from many family law areas, many Hackney residents, advice providers and community leaders have been inundated with family law related enquiries.

The session was delivered bono by expert family law barristers from Thomas Bingham Chambers, with contributions from Traymans

Solicitors who are also based in Hackney. It covered topics such as how parents can manage contact with their children following divorce or separation; the role of family mediation; how parents can enforce a court order for contact with their children; what can happen to shared financial assets when couples (married or unmarried) split up; what to do if you're a grandparent or extended family member who wishes to stop a grandchild/child relative from being taken into care; your legal rights as a domestic violence victim; and what to expect when attending a family court hearing. The barristers prepared excellent handout materials to accompany the session which were made available on the Sustainable Advice in Hackney project website (www.hackneyadvice.org.uk).



IMMIGRATION LAW

TRAINING FOR LOCAL

CLERGY

● In October, HCLC held an immigration law training session for clergy (religious and non-religious) from all over East London. Thirty curates, ministers and priests attended the event, which took place at the St John at Hackney church, next door to HCLC's offices. The immigration training session was run by Hilton von Herbert, HCLC's senior immigration caseworker (*pictured with St John of Hackney's Reverend Rob Wickham*). The purpose of the training session was to help local clergy and church workers better assist their congregations - and others - with the growing immigration problems many are facing. The idea for the training session arose as the result of HCLC Chair Ian Rathbone's discussions with the Hackney Borough Ecumenical Deans Group, which Ian also chairs.



SPOTLIGHT ON OCTOBER TO DECEMBER

MIRANDA GRELL WINS REITA CLARKE MEMORIAL

AWARD AND IS CALLED TO THE BAR OF ENGLAND AND WALES



a special adult learning programme for Bedfordshire County Council, all while working at her local hospital as a social worker specialising in child and family cases. Reita's hard work was recognised by the Queen in the Birthday Honours List in June 2002 when she was awarded an MBE for her services to her local community. The Law Centres Network chose to award Miranda with the memorial award created for Reita, who passed away in 2011, because of what they called Miranda's "award winning initiatives, her dynamism and creativity, and for her commitment to justice for the people of Hackney".

Miranda – who normally writes HCLC's award nomination entries – had no idea that she had been entered for the award and was visibly moved and surprised to hear her name called out at the LCN annual conference as the winner of the 2014 Reita Clarke Memorial Award.

Miranda, who received the award from Gillie Sharp, Director of Luton Law Centre, (pictured left) said:

"I am so moved that my HCLC colleagues put me forward for this award – and also managed to keep it a complete secret from me! Since I came to HCLC as a volunteer in February 2011, I have been the happiest I have ever been in my professional life. Hackney Community Law Centre does the most fantastic and life changing holistic legal work. To have been part of HCLC's formidable team for almost 4 years was honour enough, but to now be awarded a Reita Clarke Memorial Award as well is just amazing. Reita Clarke was a towering figure in the Law Centres movement who really

● At the Law Centres Network's (LCN) annual conference 2014, which took place in November, HCLC's Development Officer Miranda Grell was awarded the LCN's 'Reita Clarke Memorial Award for Outstanding Achievement'. The award was created in memory of the late Reita Clarke, long-time Trustee of Luton Law Centre and member of LCN's Executive Committee. It is awarded every year at LCN's national conference in recognition of outstanding work by people within the Law Centres movement.

Reita Clarke (pictured leading a Law Centres access to justice demonstration to No 10 Downing Street) moved to Britain from Jamaica in the 1960s. She was a formidable community activist. As well as

Reita's service to the Law Centres Movement, she was also a member of her local Police Community Consultative Group, West Indian Community Association, Rape Crisis Centre worker, a founding member of Luton's Mary Seacole Hostel and a St John Ambulance Service volunteer. Reita also found the time to teach English and Maths at community centres around Luton and work on



cared about access to justice for ordinary people; I just hope that I can help as many people in my life as Reita was able to help in hers”.

The night before winning the Reita Clarke Memorial Award, Miranda – who had spent the last two years studying part-time on the Bar Professional Training Course at the City Law School – was Called to the Bar of England and Wales by the Honourable Society of the Inner Temple. This news resulted in Friday’s award presentation turning into a double celebration!



“ She has been a tower of strength to the Hackney Community Law Centre team and all our partners, and will take any project on ”

Commenting on Miranda winning the Reita Clarke Memorial Award **HCLC Manager Sean Canning** (pictured with Miranda and HCLC Senior Solicitor Wendy Pettifer) said:

“Miranda Grell has worked at Hackney Community Law Centre (HCLC) since November 2011. In that period she has held a number of roles – Intern, Development Manager and Business Development Manager. She has been directly responsible for pioneering new initiatives to increase availability and access of legal advice for those who find interaction with agencies the most difficult. As well as getting others to work together Miranda has a natural gift for encouraging colleagues to believe in themselves and to excel in their work. In recent years our staff have been recognised

by colleagues across the sector – Paul Heron, in-house solicitor of the Year at the 2012 Law Society Excellence Awards; Hilton von Herbert, Immigration Lawyer of the Year – LAPG 2013; and just recently Diane Morrison won in-house Solicitor of the Year at the Law Society Excellence Awards 2014. And all the time Miranda has been busy publicising their efforts through the website, which she set up. On behalf of staff colleagues, trustees and colleagues in our partner organisations we are delighted that Miranda has won this year’s Reita Clarke Memorial Law Centre Award for Excellence”.

HCLC Chair Ian Rathbone said:

“Miranda justly deserves to be given this award for excellence, judged by her peers who know exactly how tough and demanding the situation is when you work in the law centres network. She has been a tower of strength to the Hackney Community Law Centre team and all our partners, and will take any project on, as well as thinking up new things to aid us in our efforts to secure access to justice for people in these harsh times. She has helped to make sure the Sustainable Advice Network in Hackney, a new group of advice agencies led by Hackney Community Law Centre including the Citizens Advice Bureau, has got off the ground and started providing useful seminars for advice sector and community workers, and others, on housing, family law and other topics. In all that she does, Miranda remains an enthusiastic and hopeful person who inspires others“.



Hackney Community Law Centre Statement of Financial Activities for the year ended 31 March 2014

		Unrestricted Funds	Restricted Funds	2014 Total Funds	2013 Total Funds
INCOMING RESOURCES	Notes				
Incoming Resources from generated funds					
Voluntary income	2	4,588	0	4,588	9,042
Investment income	3	174	0	174	154
Incoming resources from charitable activities	4				
Provision of legal services and advice		393,457	132,399	525,856	562,224
Total incoming resources		398,219	132,399	530,618	571,420
RESOURCES EXPENDED					
Charitable activities	5				
Provision of legal services and advice		387,361	105,864	493,225	554,565
Governance costs	6	4,250	0	4,250	4,250
Total resources expended		391,611	105,864	497,475	558,815
NET INCOMING RESOURCES		6,608	26,535	33,143	12,605
RECONCILIATION OF FUNDS					
Total funds brought forward		124,680	0	124,680	112,075
TOTAL FUNDS CARRIED FORWARD		131,288	26,535	157,823	124,680
	Notes	Unrestricted Funds	Restricted Funds	2014 Total Funds	2013 Total Funds
FIXED ASSETS					
Tangible assets	10	13,599	8,000	21,599	6,447
CURRENT ASSETS					
Work in progress		99,901	0	99,901	117,803
Debtors	12	11,307	17,745	29,052	14,980
Cash at bank and in hand		44,006	790	44,796	53,704
		155,214	18,535	173,749	186,487
CREDITORS					
Amounts falling due within one year	12	(37,525)	0	(37,525)	(68,254)
NET CURRENT ASSETS		117,689	18,535	136,224	118,233
TOTAL ASSETS LESS CURRENT LIABILITIES		131,288	26,535	157,823	124,680
NET ASSETS		131,288	26,535	157,823	124,680
FUNDS					
Unrestricted funds	14			131,288	124,680
Restricted funds				26,535	0
TOTAL FUNDS				157,823	124,680

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 and with the Financial Reporting Standard for Smaller Entities (effective April 2008). The financial statements were approved by the Board of Trustees on 21 July 2014 and were signed on it behalf by: I Rathbone - Trustee

FUNDERS AND DONATIONS

HCLC would like to thank the following donors and funders for their support in 2014:

Louise Christian
Sally Jeffery
Sophie Earnshaw
London Borough of Hackney
Trust for London
Lloyds TSB Foundation
Big Lottery Fund
Garden Court Chambers for donating
£1,000 towards the purchase of new
legal text books
Faegre Baker Daniels for donating £1,500
towards the running of the Centre
Farrer and Co Charitable Trust for
donating £5,000 towards HCLC's Interns
and Volunteers programme
The Justice Gap for raising £1,600 in
sponsorship for HCLC from the 2014
London Legal Walk
Sam Mardon at One Man Film for
making a wonderful film of HCLC's 2014
London Legal Walk (featuring Sadiq Khan
MP, the Shadow Secretary of State for
Justice)
New Unity Church's Congregation for
donating £519.17 to HCLC

Faegre Baker Daniels Foundation

We would like to express our deepest gratitude to the Faegre Baker Daniels Foundation for making a £1,500 donation to HCLC in 2014. HCLC has worked with volunteer lawyers from Faegre Baker Daniels for a number of years on various pro bono projects. Since 2012, Faegre Baker Daniels, alongside Debevoise and Plimpton LLP, BPP Law School and the London Borough of Hackney libraries service, has helped to run HCLC's Dalston Pop-Up service, which provides free, confidential and independent legal advice to Hackney residents with consumer and debt issues on Tuesday evenings in Dalston CLR James library. In 2013, the Dalston Pop-Up service won two national awards – the inaugural Halsbury Legal Award for 'Pro Bono Team of the Year' and the Law Works Pro Bono Award for 'Best Partnership in Pro Bono'.

'Dalston Pop-Up' Volunteers

In 2014, HCLC's Dalston Pop-Up evening advice clinic for people with debt and consumer problems continued to go from strength to strength with many more Hackney residents being assisted. As well as advising and writing letters for clients on a range of issues, the clinic helped put 9 people with major debt concerns in touch with debt advice charities, 7 people with serious housing problems in touch with housing law services, 8 people with urgent problems in touch with services that could give them advice in time, 3 people with employment queries in touch with the specialist Employment Law Telephone Advice Line and 6 people with more complex queries in touch with the LawWorks individuals service, the LawWorks Mediation service and other services.

We would thank the following pro bono volunteers for continuing to run and support HCLC's Dalston Pop Consumer and Debt Evening Advice Service at Dalston CLR James Library throughout 2014 with particular thanks to Rebecca Greenhalgh Pro Bono Manager at Debevoise & Plimpton LLP; Laura Richards, Senior Supervising Solicitor at BPP Law School; and Stephen Llewellyn, Counsel at Faegre Baker Daniels LLP.

BPP Law School: Laura Richards, Phil Stone, Imogen Forbes-Edwards, Ojeda Vanterpool, Whitney May, Yasemin Ahmet, Modele Elojofi, Abigail Boafobrewu, Anna Chykanastkikh, Georgie Watts (BPP), Ricky Parmar, Chris Mallet, Frederick Pagnell, Alex Sussman, Shante Nwanaebi.

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Faegre Baker Daniels LLP:

Stephen Llewellyn, Douglas Badder, James Wagner, Stephen, Meera Doshi, Frankie Cooke, Sam Oladeinde.

London Borough of Hackney Libraries

Service: Michelle Gardner, Pervez Chuhan, Anthony Kane, Catherine De Abaitua, Dharminder Singh, Clinton Skepple.

Dalston CLR James Library Form Filling Service Volunteers

And a big thank you to the students from BPP Law School who assisted with HCLC's Employment and Support Allowance, Disability Living Allowance and Personal Independence Payment form filling clinic at Dalston CLR James Library: Stacy Dacosta, Tania Ling, Sook Kwan Chan, Zeinab Harb, Faisa Hassan, Nazran Zhafr, Joe Perrett, Kunika Pandey, Kavin Shroff, Shaba Zaynah.



New Unity Unitarian Church

HCLC is extremely grateful to Minister Andy Pakula (above) and the congregation of New Unity Unitarian church for raising funds for HCLC in 2014. Every month New Unity, which is based in Stoke Newington, selects a charity to support and the congregation make donations towards the chosen cause. In June, New Unity raised over £500 for HCLC.

Hackney Umpires Cricket Club

We would like to thank the Hackney Umpires Cricket Club for donating the proceeds of sale from its 2014 Year Book to HCLC. We are touched by the team's support for the work that we do and wish all the players great success in the 2015 cricket season.



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