

Using law for social change

In our 46th year, Law Centre NI continues to stand out as a vital regional organisation that supports the advice sector and the public in creating a better society through law. Our passion and determination for the law remains undiminished.

“ I feel that I had been carrying such a heavy load of debt, no money and no life whatsoever and felt like a non-person. I can sleep now and wake feeling rested. Finally...after all these years.

OUR IMPACT IN NUMBERS

£1.5 million financial outcomes secured for our clients

27,421 pieces of legal advice

27,000 new website users

3,763 people provided with legal help

1,014 clients supported with casework

100% of our Clinical Law students would recommend a programme at the Law Centre

Full Lexcel quality re-accreditation with 22 areas of good practice

32 legal information videos in 12 languages developed in our specialist areas of law

26 Professional Learning courses attended by over 500 delegates

OUR IMPACT IN SOCIAL SECURITY

14,872 pieces of social security advice

- ★ A Law Centre NI case before the Court of Justice of the European Union resulted in a landmark judgment, which established that access to the NHS meets the requirement for EU citizens in the UK to have Comprehensive Sickness Insurance in order to be entitled to social security support. This impacts not only our client, but thousands of EU citizens in the UK.
- ★ Our legal challenge on the denial of vital bereavement benefits for unmarried couples reinforced the argument for a long-awaited change in legislation. In January 2023, MPs finally approved the Bereavement Benefit Remedial Order 2023, which extends eligibility for bereavement benefits to unmarried partners.
- ★ Following our *CG v DfC* case, an interim policy change was introduced which means that any EU citizen in the UK with pre-settled status and unable to work will be assessed individually to establish whether they are living in hardship and therefore entitled to Universal Credit.
- ★ We successfully appealed a finding by the Information Commissioner which had upheld a decision by the Department for Communities not to provide us with statistics on social security appeals. We have asked that the Department now publishes this data annually. This will ensure that statistics are reported in an open and transparent way to encourage improved access to justice.
- ★ Our recommendations on the recovery of benefit overpayments caused by official error were implemented by the Department for Communities.
- ★ We hosted four Adviser Network Meetings for the sector with 100% satisfaction rate.

OUR IMPACT IN EMPLOYMENT

5,781 pieces of employment advice

- ★ We upheld the employment rights of migrant communities across Northern Ireland, including securing a settlement for a Ukrainian refugee who was forced to resign from his job after not being paid. The client said our support gave him a renewed sense of confidence in the legal system in Northern Ireland.
- ★ We challenged the refusal of an employer to pay a low-paid worker reasonable expenses and secured a substantial settlement of £4,000.
- ★ We represented clients before the Employment Tribunal, including a case of unfair selection for redundancy. We secured a significant financial settlement of £6,500 for the client, who said that he could now move forward with his life.
- ★ We supported a client who was dismissed after asking for payslips and an employment contract. The case settled for £20,000, providing a financial cushion for a client who had suffered years of financial hardship and which meant he was able to put his life back together.
- ★ We produced a Guide to the Employment Tribunal to help the sector and public understand the processes and requirements that apply before making a legal claim.

“ They are vital to helping people who cannot afford legal advice. I am on low income and would not have wanted to – or been able to – take further action without the information and support provided.

OUR IMPACT IN IMMIGRATION

6,788 pieces of immigration advice



- ★ We provided legal advice to over 1,000 Ukrainians, their families and sponsors to help them with their resettlement in Northern Ireland through our work at the Ukraine Assistance Centres.
- ★ We secured a Syrian reunion application for a family who had been separated for a significant period of time. This was a test case, which may now positively impact other family reunion cases.
- ★ We supported victims of domestic abuse to establish immigration status in their own right.
- ★ 90 cases dealt with by our Syrian Vulnerable Persons Resettlement Project providing family reunion support, advice on UK visa requirements, travel advice and immigration applications.
- ★ We convened and led a Refugee and Asylum Forum gathering for 70 community and voluntary organisations and individuals, which informed our "Priorities for Action" report – a blueprint for a Refugee Integration Strategy in Northern Ireland.
- ★ We secured a policy change that saw asylum seekers aged 60+ gain access to the Translink Smart Pass.
- ★ We produced and updated a Refugee Transition Guide in five languages to explain the process of transitioning from asylum seeker to having leave to remain.
- ★ We secured an amendment to the Justice (Sexual Offences and Trafficking Victims) Act, which provided up to 12 months additional support to survivors of human trafficking.
- ★ We led the Belfast Pride Parade with the message that refugees and asylum seekers are welcome in Northern Ireland.
- ★ We secured an agreement by Belfast City Council to provide free gym membership for people seeking sanctuary.



OUR IMPACT IN INNOVATION AND ENGAGEMENT

- ★ 17 Queen's University law students completed an intensive 10-week Clinical Law programme at the Law Centre, providing essential training for aspiring social justice lawyers.
- ★ 58 accessible legal information resources for the advice sector and the public, allowing people to realise their rights.
- ★ The launch of a new Lunch and Learn platform with self-help interactive tools which enables 24/7 learning.
- ★ 14 multilingual Adviser Practice Guides produced across all areas of our work.
- ★ 2 new Advice Changes Lives campaigns.
- ★ A new website with over 27,000 new users since its launch in September 2022.
- ★ We secured Pro Bono support from Barclay's Bank which allowed us to develop a plan for future proofing our Professional Learning Services, facilitated by Pilotlight.
- ★ A collaboration with local councils to develop an online hub featuring 32 videos in 12 languages, which have been watched over 1,000 times on YouTube. *November 2022*
- ★ 240,000 impressions across our social media platforms, as well as increasing our reach via our new Instagram platform.
- ★ Our quarterly Social Security Law and Practice Bulletin was issued to over 800 advice sector staff and others.
- ★ We convened and led the new Cliff Edge Coalition campaign on welfare rights.
- ★ We secured support from Pro Bono Economics for a bespoke unlocking impact study to explore the economic and social value of the Law Centre's work.



Thank you to our funders. The work we do is only possible because of the generous support that we receive.

**Department for Communities
Department for the Economy
The Executive Office**

**AB Charitable Trust
Oak Foundation
Justice Together
The Legal Education Foundation**