Law Clinic
Annual Review 2016-2017

Standing up for justice
“In supporting organisations that stand up for people struggling in the community, I was able to develop skills that I would not have been able to hone within the parameters of an academic course alone. Being able to demonstrate the ability to deal with sensitive cases helped me stand out in the rigorous interview process for a training contract.”

Rhona Egerton, future trainee solicitor, Allen and Overy
Students incur a substantial debt by virtue of their university studies and we are committed to providing them with a standout education. Being part of the Law Clinic means delivering a crucial community service while helping to develop the softer skills many employers are looking for. The nature and extent of law clinic experience is a recurring question in interviews—and one that sets our students apart.

Working in the Law Clinic means students develop a range of skills such as client care and interaction, drafting and research and, critically, social awareness. This year we grew and deepened our relationships with partners in the community to reach more people in need of our services—and we are indebted to them for the rich experiences our students have gained as a result. This annual review is dedicated to them.

Through our work with partners we are able reach more people—and are gaining increased recognition for our work. Now in our 21st year the Law Clinic continues to grow year-on-year both in terms of student numbers and the cases we are asked to take on. This necessarily creates new challenges, particularly in ensuring students gain a sufficient and meaningful clinic experience and maintaining access to quality supervisory and teaching resources.

Inexorably linked to the growth of the Clinic is the development of the Clinical Legal Studies (CLS) course—a third year option which provides a bridge between the purely academic legal doctrine and the practical work of a trainee lawyer. This year, the number of students taking the course doubled and when asked why they were doing it the majority of students said that it was to gain practical experience.

We take this responsibility seriously, just as the students do when working in the Law Clinic for members of the public. Throughout 2016/17 we have responded by increasing the support we provide students in terms of training and counselling—and by preparing to expand our academic team (page 15).

As we look towards a new academic year we find ourselves entering an exciting phase that would not be possible without the ongoing support of our partners.

“Our role in overseeing the work of the students is to instil in them the highest possible values, while at the same time developing in them a humility and understanding of the social situation in which they and the clients come into contact.”

John Peake, Law Clinic Director
Mariya Kolomiyets won the 2016/17 Law Clinic Volunteer of the Year award and was instrumental in setting up a partnership with CLIC Sargent.

“I’ve always wanted to make a difference. I like helping people and problem solving with others. In the Law Clinic there are real opportunities to connect the relationships that you build in the community with the legal knowledge you’ve gained in the School. I am most proud to have been involved in the set-up of the CLIC Sargent drop-in sessions. It is a true accomplishment and demonstrates the dedication, hard work, and the impact that the Clinic is making on the community.”

bristol.ac.uk/law/law-clinic/mariya
In 2016/17 over 30 families attended Law Clinic drop-ins at CLIC Sargent to gain valuable legal advice at a particularly difficult time in their lives.

This year we cemented plans for a new model of working. Providing Law Clinic drop-ins with local partners enables us to provide specialised support to those that need our services most whilst maximising the impact of student and client time. Rachel Banks from CLIC Sargent outlines what the service has meant to parents of children and young people living with cancer in terms of managing the legal obstacles that arise with the diagnosis.

**The need**
Prior to the partnership there was no legal support on offer to families whilst their child had treatment in local hospitals. Some families are from Bristol, but many are living away from home to be near their child. It is very difficult for families to travel or spend hours on the phone to find out about their legal position, so the drop-in sessions make everything much easier – providing an essential service at a very difficult time.

**The service**
The use of the CLIC Sargent Home from Home, Sam’s House, where families can stay for free to be near their child, has proved an ideal place for the drop-in. Some of the families staying in Sam’s House have been able to use the service whilst staying close to the hospitals – families who come into our day beds or clinic are also able to combine appointments with a visit to the drop-in. Overall, the service has been well received and is regularly attended with an average of one to three referrals each week.

“We are very aware that no-one asks to become ill and that cancer’s impact can be huge affecting the whole family and many around them. To be able to offer any support to people in crisis is very important.”

Rachel Banks, Social Work Team Leader, CLIC Sargent

**The students**
The students have provided an exceptional service and are well supported by Law Clinic staff who have an overview of the cases before the students are allocated to pre-empt any potential issues. The students have indicated that the experience has not just enhanced their professional learning but also them personally. Students also have access to a counselling service to help them deal with the potential emotional impact via the Law Clinic.

**The impact**
Families value the face to face, personal contact in preference to having to be on the phone. One family was delighted that on the intervention of the Law Clinic with the Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) their state benefits were re-instated. Another family received the higher rate mobility component of their Disability Living Allowance Application which in turn enabled them to apply for other mobility assistance. This was managed without the family having to go through a long and complex appeal, during which time they would have received no disabled living allowance.

**The future**
We are committed to our partnership with the Law Clinic and are now considering referring some of the families from our bereavement service to it. We have had a such a strong response from CLIC Sargent’s South West Social Work Team, that we have informed our national colleagues about the service and strongly suggested to them that they may wish to look to their own Universities in the Principal Treatment Centres to offer a similar service.
“Bristol Drugs Project works with people of all ages who have had a relationship with drugs at many different levels. It provided a really amazing legal exchange about how the law could help get them on their feet. I now understand more deeply about ‘labels’ and that actually their problems are the same as many of our other clients – with the drugs just an added complication.”

bristol.ac.uk/law/law-clinic/sanya
Dozens of individuals gained access to pro-bono legal advice through the Bristol Drug Project drop-ins in 2016/17.

Knowledge of legal rights can empower some of the most vulnerable in the community. Bringing legal advice to individuals who may not have the ability to search out our services for themselves is a key feature of our drop-ins. CEO Maggie Telfer and Support Worker Ed Holder from Bristol Drugs Project outline what the Law Clinic partnership has meant to their clients.

**The need**
In recent years legal advice opportunities have shrunk along with Legal Aid and other funding streams – so the Law Clinic is a fantastic resource for the people who use Bristol Drug Project’s services.

**The service**
The service took off very quickly with all initial appointments booked. This prompted us to move to a more frequent service. Lots of clients had indicated that they felt lost with the huge range of legal issues they face in their lives – so we weren’t surprised by the uptake at all. Many just need a brief bit of guidance about how to proceed to feel that they’re not on their own with it. Individuals helped by the service appreciate it as a very valued resource that is not easily available elsewhere.

“\[I\] went to Citizens Advice for a personal matter and was signposted to the Law Clinic. Within two appointments, something I’d been getting nowhere with was resolved. In the first appointment, I started to see how the skills and professionalism I was benefitting from would be of huge benefit to our own clients,”

Ed Holder, Support Worker, Bristol Drugs Project

**The students**
Since the start of the partnership it has been clear that the Law School students are incredibly well prepared and able to immediately reduce the stress clients accessing the service are experiencing. In addition to the support the Clinic provided, we put on a half-day session around drugs, alcohol, services and treatment. For the individuals using BDPs services it’s not always about being able to provide a solution, but being listened to, understood and respected. Law Clinic students understood this.

**The Future**
Moving forward we hope to increase the frequency of drop-in sessions. We’d like to acknowledge the empathetic ear that the Law Clinic Director has had to both the needs of our client group as well as the needs and anxieties of the students. Louise Chalice, the Law Clinic Executive Assistant, was also instrumental in getting the clinic at BDP off the ground and we’d like to pass on our thanks to her for all the help she gave to the partnership.
Bella Cooper is currently in her final year. Over the summer she secured an internship with Baker McKenzie.

“I applied to work on the Litigants in Person project due to its embryonic nature. I liked the idea of being involved in something from the very beginning. Working with people and applying the law is very different to learning the law in its black and white form. The skills I have gained have helped me in several areas, including my internship this summer.”

bristol.ac.uk/law/law-clinic/bella
For an individual with no experience of the law, finding themselves in a position where they can’t afford legal representation and need to be a Litigant in Person (LiP) and put forward their own case in court is incredibly daunting. Law Clinic student, Bella Cooper, outlines the role students are providing in terms of helping such individuals understand the legal process and what they need to prepare.

**The service**
The LiP project was built through co-operation between the University of Bristol Law Clinic, University of Law, and the University of West of England (UWE) Law clinic. The project was ground-breaking not just by its nature, but by its union of all three institutions. The service offers educational sessions to Litigants in Person to outline the court process itself, the different stages of appeal, the formalities and admin involved - as well as signposting those who may attend to one of the clinics, should they need further assistance.

**The clients**
It’s easy to overlook the human elements of a court case – the stress, anxiety and worry an upcoming court case can create, alongside the uncertainty and financial threat can be extremely draining and detrimental to those involved and their families. An insurance case involving a very genuine family up against an experienced insurance firm, and a very crafty claimant, illustrated this to me. It really brought home how difficult the law can be when you are not one of those fortunate enough to have a large bank account balance.

**The challenges**
One of the most challenging aspects of the project has been making people see the purpose and advantages of attending these sessions. Attendance was very low at the start, and this could be down to a number of factors - people’s dismay at the court process in general meaning another optional trip to court being the last thing they want to do. Moving forward we are looking to identify more effective ways to promote the service and the purpose of the sessions for those needing support.

**The experience**
The experience I have gained has been invaluable. Working with people and applying the law is very different to learning the law in its black and white form. The skills I have gained have helped me in several areas, including my internship this summer. I genuinely believe there are voids for those who cannot afford legal advice, so doing what I can to help solve these individuals is a priceless reward of being part of the Clinic.

“When I look at firms now, I make sure to check how many pro bono hours they offer their employees and see what schemes they have in place to help those in similar situations to those we help with the Clinic”

Bella Cooper, Law Student
Alice Ratcliffe, secured the Law Clinic Volunteer of the Year award in 2016. Following a year out travelling, she returned to the Clinic this year as a summer intern – a position funded through the generosity of our alumni.

“Working for the Clinic without the worry of simultaneously balancing my academic studies was great. My approach and confidence to the work increased dramatically. I felt confident in tackling and managing a vast case load - and I was more determined than ever to get stuck in and develop my transferable skills with a training contract in mind. I am delighted I am now a trainee embarking on an exciting legal career with DAC Beachcroft LLP, an extremely friendly and prestigious law firm.”

bristol.ac.uk/law/law-clinic/alice
In addition to our work with partners, throughout 2016/17 we received over 410 enquiries, worked on over 200 cases, and picked up over 80 referrals from other advice centres.

The Clinic deals with a vast array of issues including housing and property, landlord and tenant, neighbour and nuisance disputes, contract law questions, employment law queries, consumer rights, welfare benefits and social security. Cases come to us directly as potential clients make enquiries via our website or phone our offices - and indirectly through a variety of referral services. This year we also strengthened our year-round offering with an expanded intern scheme.

**New facilities**
This year saw us move into our newly developed offices in Berkeley Square, providing a dedicated space for appointments with members of the general public to get free legal advice. For students, the new professional offices have facilitated collaborative working and seen them embrace their roles within the Clinic.

**Generating regular referrals**
The Personal Support Unit (PSU) at Bristol County Court operates in a similar way to Victim Support in the Criminal Courts. The staff are there to provide support rather than legal advice. Meanwhile the Citizens Advice Bureau (CAB) has too many people asking for its support. There is a gap in provision which we meet. Over the past year we have received approximately twelve referrals from the PSU and over 30 referrals from the CAB. Helping reduce demand on these services means providing help to people who might otherwise do without. This has been very motivating for students involved in their cases. We are looking forward to continuing this relationship into the next academic year.

“The past few years have seen radical change within the legal services market to the regulation and delivery of legal services, underscored by further cuts to legal aid and advice centre budgets. The Law Clinic has provided a much needed service to the local community at a significant point in time.”

Michael Webster, incoming Teaching Fellow, Law Clinic

**A year-round service**
Those involved in a legal dispute will acknowledge that they do not just occur during term time or outside the exam period. The Law Clinic’s intention is to provide a year-round service for those who need it. If a student is unavailable, a case or its client should not have to wait. This year, our alumni helped support five summer interns continue the work of the Clinic over the summer, with students able to both follow through on live cases and support new enquiries that arose.
“This year the extent of the Law School’s contribution to the community has seen us as runners up in the LawWorks award for best contribution by a law school, and shortlisted in the Best New Student Pro Bono Activity category for the LiPService project. These nominations illustrate that the work of the Law Clinic and its students is increasingly being recognised on a national footing.”

John Peake, Law Clinic Director
As a top ten UK Law School*, we attract the very best talent from all over the world because of the stand out opportunities our students get.

Standing out

The work of the Law Clinic embeds the practical application of law into students’ studies. Students develop the skills they need to shine whatever career path they choose through the provision of a holistic package of support from the law school and our partners.

Transferable skills
Working in the Law Clinic helps build skills, empathy and much more to deepen students’ learning experience. Whether Law Clinic members are preparing for a career in or out of the law, the skills they build as a result of working on cases, liaising with partners and collaborating with fellow students are invaluable. Being able to think critically, evaluate evidence, and marshal sound, rationally-grounded arguments will see them graduate as enquiring individuals with a rich appreciation of law in both business and society. These are skills that all employers are looking for.

Support and connections
With our partners we offer a diverse range of support for our students - academic support and professional guidance as well as emotional support and support building an understanding of the diverse needs of some of the most vulnerable people in society. This year we are particularly grateful to:

- Our drop-in partners for preparing students so well for the types of cases they were facing
- Osborne Clarke for their ongoing support and training of our Clinic students
- Eversheds Sutherland for providing all our Clinic students with a copy of their Guide to Legal Drafting

Street Law
The Law Clinic’s StreetLaw project involves students delivering presentations to schools or groups in the community so that they are better able to deal with particular types of situations in the future. This year we continued to build on the work started in 2015/16. Presenting in front of younger students saw our members adapt the pace and language to fit the pupils’ ability. The success of the sessions has opened up many opportunities with the Clinic exploring the opportunity to expand the service to additional schools for 2017/18.

“As a former member of the Law Clinic, I understand its importance as a resource for society’s disadvantaged in the face of austerity and the associated cuts to legal aid. Fast forward to 2016, when a colleague at Osborne Clarke asked if we should sponsor and support the Law Clinic, I answered with a resounding “yes”. In addition to the stewardship of its Director, John Peake, firms such as Osborne Clarke are very well placed to mentor and educate students on how to provide effective legal advice.”

Harri Davies (LLB 2013), former trainee solicitor, Osborne Clarke

*The University of Bristol Law School was ranked 8th best law school in the 2018 Complete University Guide.
“I am looking forward to expanding the range of services that the Law Clinic can offer to the local community; to engineering new modes of legal education delivery, and to offering students a broader range of training opportunities and employability skills. It is my intention for the Law Clinic to become recognised as a leading centre for the delivery of legal services, and also as an internationally acclaimed research centre for legal education.”

Michael Webster, incoming Teaching Fellow, Law Clinic (left)
Forward look

We are supported greatly by the Law School and alumni without whom this work would not be possible. Demand for the services of the Law Clinic continues to grow, just as demand for Law Clinic experience from the students grows. The University of Bristol Law Clinic cannot afford to stand still.

Expanding opportunities
For the new academic year we are getting ready for further expansion of the Clinic with the addition of new colleagues, Michael Webster and Omar Madhloom. Their appointments illustrate that the Law School shares our ambition to develop the Law Clinic for the benefit of the students, public and prospective employers.

The skills and experience of Michael and Omar add to the areas of work that the Law Clinic students will be able to undertake which can only be advantageous to them. It also allows us to look at additional options for the development of the Law Clinic while maintaining a commitment to existing partners and assisting those people for whom the Law Clinic is the only means they have for accessing advice and help.

Objectives for the year
• To continue to develop the partnership with law firm, Osborne Clarke, to provide professional training sessions so important to student development.
• To develop outreach through local organisations and to further develop the links with the organisations with which we already work.
• To make further links with organisations such as LawWorks to provide students with access to online tutorials, ensuring they are better equipped to deal with diverse legal issues.
• To maintain and increase student numbers through a transparent and open admissions process.
• To expand in size so that by the end of 2017/18 we are able to offer a place in the Law Clinic to 10% of the Law students.

“I’m delighted to be joining Bristol University Law Clinic. With significant reforms to vocational legal education proposed, and further cuts to legal aid expected, this is an exciting time to be part of the Clinic’s expansion in terms of access to justice.”

Omar Madhloom, incoming Teaching Fellow, Law Clinic (2nd left in photo)
“I am aiming to build and better our practice this year. I want to make people more aware of the service we provide, and continue to support those in need of our legal advice with the utmost professionalism. While we also advise those seeking help from CLIC Sargent, Bristol Drugs Project and Litigants in Person, I want to branch out even further to other groups. This will ultimately benefit more people in need and enhance the student advisers’ real-life experience.”

Bethane Harland, Incoming Student President, Law Clinic (right)
Finances and thanks

For the academic year September 2016–September 2017 our expenditure grew by 30% from £57,755 to £75,624. In addition to expanding our estate to accommodate new staff and more students, this reflects our commitment to expand the service to those that need it most. We would like to thank the commitment and generosity of our alumni and other sponsors whose support, both in time and in funds, has allowed us to reach more people than ever before this year. It would not have been possible without you.

Thanks to:

- The Clinic Student Committee: It is testimony to the Committee, ably led by Rhona Egerton and Oliver Foudah, that the Clinic’s continued transformation from a volunteer-led organisation into something more vibrant has been possible.
- The Law School and University, for its ongoing support of the Law Clinic.
- All our partners, with whom we share a mutual commitment to the local community.
- The Law School, for providing us with dedicated pro-bono offices at 8-10 Berkeley Square.
- Osborne Clarke for its ongoing commitment to providing invaluable support to our students, so essential in preparing them for the cases they will be encountering.
- Eversheds Sutherland for providing all our Clinic students with a copy of their Guide to Legal Drafting.
- Our alumni donors for covering the costs of five students so we could extend our service throughout the summer, providing valuable support to those people whose cases were still active during this time.
- And to Alice Ratcliffe, Millie Rix, Serena Crawshay-Williams, Paige Franks and Charis Thornton for giving up their summer holidays to make it happen.

The Clinic Funding requirements for 2017/18

To reach more people it is essential that we continue to increase our support of students through a balance of training, mentoring and ongoing academic support. We are therefore looking for funding for the following:

- £5,000: To fund our summer internship scheme
- £2,500: To fund a student training initiative
- £1,500: To cover Law Clinic running costs in relation to Streetlaw
- £650: Sponsorship of Volunteer of the Year award and event

If you are interested in supporting in this way please contact John. peeke@bristol.ac.uk
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