



Student Law Office

Annual Report
2010–2011



www.northumbrialawschool.co.uk

Welcome to Northumbria School of Law

Foreword by Kevin Kerrigan, Acting Dean of the School of Law

This year has been a real triumph for the Student Law Office, with the winning of not only the Attorney General's Award for the Pro Bono School of the Year 2010, but also the National Training Awards 2010, at both local and also national level, where the judging panel commented that our integrated teaching programme was "outstanding, exemplary and truly inspirational".

As this report goes to press the SLO has been shortlisted for the Law Society's Excellence Awards in the category of Excellence in Community Investment. The award highlights best practice and innovation in community investment including fundraising and charitable giving, pro bono and non-legal volunteering. Competition for this award is stiff including major international law firms, Freshfield Bruckhaus Deringer LLP, Hogan Lovells LLP and Simmons & Simmons LLP but this esteemed company reflects the excellent work of the Student Law Office.

These awards reflect the huge amount of staff and student time devoted to offering a free legal service for the community as part of our clinical legal education programmes. I would like in particular to thank our administrators, Dawn Nellist and Laura Unthank, who show such commitment to the students and the work of the Student Law Office and ensure the smooth running of a large scale operation.

The School's commitment to dissemination of best practice was shown through the publication of a new book *A Student Guide to Clinical Legal Education and Pro Bono* written by Student Law Office supervisors and the International Journal of Clinical Legal Education Conference held in Valencia, Spain which was attended by 300 people from over 40 countries.

My congratulations to James Donnelly who won the David Gray Solicitors prize for the best performance in Student Law Office and to Megan McColgan, who won the Irwin



Mitchell scholarship and spent a month in New York with our colleagues at City University New York.

We are indebted to those legal partners who have supported our work and in particular who have engaged with our M Law programme by offering students training placements. We continue to work with our community partners such as Shelter, Age Concern, and also Victim Support, with some significant successes in the Criminal Injury cases referred to us.

This year sees the development of exciting new partnerships and projects, with a new Environmental Law Project, including the creation of a free environmental and planning law service, an outreach clinic in the East end of Newcastle with support from local firm Ben Hoare Bell, and the launch of LawWorks North East, a pro bono initiative which will be coordinated through the School of Law. All these projects will expand the availability of pro bono advice to groups who may otherwise struggle to access this.

This contribution to the local community is a key value which we hope our students take forward after they leave the Student Law Office and join the profession.

My thanks to all those who have supported the Student Law Office's work in the past, and I look forward to another successful year.

Kevin Kerrigan

The Student Law Office

This is Northumbria University School of Law's award-winning pro bono law clinic where students, under the supervision of qualified staff, offer a full legal service to members of the public. The clinic is a key part of our four-year M Law degree course which integrates the professional skills of the Legal Practice Course into the new Masters level degree. We have 22 members of staff – a mix of solicitors, barristers and one caseworker, two administrators and two trainee solicitors. Students take on real cases, and provide a full legal service, conducting interviews, researching, advising, drafting and, in suitable cases, providing representation. Their work is closely supervised, but normally all client contact is through the students.

By way of preparation, students take part in a Student Law Office program in Year 3, where they practice interviewing and research and develop an awareness of the office systems, and their own professional responsibilities. In Year 4, they join the live client program, and this accounts for around 40% of their final year mark. Assessment is by means of a personal file, which is a portfolio of the work they have completed during the year, in addition to two reflective pieces, looking back at their own development during the year.

Year 4 students are also assessed for competence in writing and interviewing as part of the Legal Practice Course.

The Student Law Office experience is also available as an option on the full-time Legal Practice Course and the Bar Professional Training Course, although places are limited.

We are proud of the contribution made by the Student Law Office to the local community, offering free advice and assistance to many who could not otherwise afford this.

For further information check our website at www.studentlawoffice.co.uk or email us at la.studentlawoffice@northumbria.ac.uk

Facts and figures 2010/2011

Students involved in the Student Law Office:

Year 3 – 195

Year 4 – 149

Elective students – 14

Total students working in SLO last year in live client programme – 358

Graduate Diploma in Law students in Shelter project – 5

Cases:

New enquiries – 603

New and existing cases conducted – 400

Compensation recovered for clients:

£205,000

Areas of law:

Civil litigation including consumer and CICA appeals

Crime and criminal appeals

Employment

Housing

Welfare benefits

Family

Small business

Our community partners:

Age Concern

Shelter

Victim Support

Awards

National Training Awards

The National Training Awards recognise the impact that excellent training, learning and development have on achieving outstanding organisational and individual success and provides a benchmark for standards of excellence in training in the UK.

At a ceremony held at the Discovery Museum on 21 September 2010 the School of Law won two awards in the education and training category. Firstly we were successful in the Regional Training Award which recognises the outstanding impact and benefits demonstrated as a direct result of the training provided in the School of Law, and in particular, the student experience in the Student Law Office.

Secondly, the School of Law was awarded the UK National Training Award and this is awarded to true exemplars of excellence. This enabled us to compete for the overall UK

awards, and at a ceremony on 1 December 2010 we won the coveted National Training Award 2010 'Winner of the Year' accolade in the 'Providing Education and Training' category. The award reflects the general excellence that is the hallmark of our work in the School and the Student Law Office.

"Outstanding, exemplary and truly inspirational".

National Training Awards judging panel

Law Society's Excellence Awards

The Student Law Office was delighted to be highly commended in the category of Excellence in Learning and Development at the Law Society Awards in London on 21 October 2010. We fended off stiff competition from Eversheds, Linklaters and the College of Law to be awarded this prestigious award recognising the excellence of the groundbreaking and innovative Student Law Office programme, and its commitment to clinical legal education.

"This entry was a clear stand-out as an example of an excellent legal education programme that combined practical experience with academic learning, while making a valuable contribution to the community. The judges liked the combined delivery of law degree and LPC work, and the exposure to hands-on practical experience ensures that graduating students are 'office ready', which is exactly what employers are looking for. The programme demonstrates best practice in legal education while at the same time making a positive contribution to the community."

Law Society Excellence Awards 2010 Learning and Development category – highly commended



Staff accepting the National Training Award for the North East



School of Law staff accepting the National Training Award



Student Law Office staff accepting the Excellence in Learning and Development award

Gemma Vine, a former School of Law student, was also highly commended in the Junior Lawyers category for showing outstanding commitment and professionalism in her work and has progressed from a trainee to running the inquest department. Gemma Vine graduated from the Student Law Office in 2008 and it is extremely heartening to see former students doing so well.

firms to be shortlisted, and to be nominated for such an award demonstrated that we are recognised as a valued and significant part of the legal community in the region.



Gemma Vine accepting the Junior Lawyers award



Students and staff at the Law Society Annual Dinner

Newcastle Law Society Awards – ‘Firm of the year’

On 11 November 2010 the Student Law Office was nominated for ‘Law Firm of the Year’ at the Newcastle Law Society Annual Dinner and was up against stiff competition from BHP Law and Gibson and Co. The Student Law Office was one of three

Student soundbite

What I enjoyed most about the Student Law Office was...

“Feeling that the work I was doing was for the benefit of an actual client, as opposed to being purely theoretical.”



District Judge Large, Student Law Office staff and former students

Student Law Office Visitors

Visits from Sheffield Hallam University

The Student Law Office hosted visits from Colleen Smith and Anna Deans from Sheffield Hallam University on 16 September 2010. Both visitors were interested to see how the Student Law Office operates, as Sheffield Hallam has its own law clinic.

Director of University of Leeds Pro Bono Clinic

Lydia Bleasdale Hill from the University of Leeds attended the Student Law Office on 16 September 2010. Lydia interviewed Carol Boothby as part of her teaching fellowship project which involves finding out about pro bono provisions in various law schools. This project has now been made available through the LawWorks website.

Presentation for retiring District Judge Large

On 6 October 2010 the Student Law Office hosted a presentation for retiring District Judge Large. District Judge Large was a key host in our judicial shadowing programme in the County Courts in North Shields from its inception in 2005 and the Student Law Office took this opportunity to thank him for providing students with this wonderful experience. Various members of Northumbria University staff attended, including our Pro Vice-Chancellor Lucy Winkell, a long time friend of District Judge Large, along with other district judges and a number of former students who benefitted from District Judge Large allowing them to shadow him.

More recently, District Judge Large has been spotted back on the bench at North Shields, and we hope to keep in contact with him. He also gave a lecture this year to our Year 4 Student Law Office students which gave practical tips and advice on representing in the County Court, sharing some of his court experiences.

Case study

“Mr I was the victim of an unprovoked attack in which he sustained cuts to his head and face leaving him with permanent scarring. Following the attack he suffered from mental anxiety and was unable to work as a result of the incident. On application to the CICA for compensation he was awarded compensation at £1,500 in respect of his facial injury only. The Student Law Office assisted Mr I in appealing this decision on the basis that this did not sufficiently compensate his physical injury, mental injury or loss of earnings which he suffered as a result of the incident. The Student Law Office represented Mr I at his CICA appeal hearing and he was awarded £22,182.10 in compensation.”

Pro Vice-Chancellor – Ian Postlethwaite

The Pro Vice-Chancellor visited the Student Law Office on 7 October 2010 to have a look at the work that the Student Law Office is involved with. The Pro Vice-Chancellor visited the office, talked to a number of students and sat in on Kevin Kerrigan’s criminal firm meeting.

Visit from Chinese clinical legal education colleagues

Meng Jun, Director of Clinical Education at Beijing Normal University (BNU), and Dr Cheng Jier, Director of a Criminal Clinic at China Youth University for Political Sciences (CYU), attended the School of Law on October 18–19 October 2010. The Chinese visitors were met in the Student Law Office by Director Carol Boothby and Solicitor Tutor Sarah Morse and took this opportunity to discuss clinical legal education here at Northumbria. The visitors were interested in the types of



Carol Boothby, Sarah Morse, Dr Cheng Jier and Meng Jun

clients and cases undertaken, student activities, teaching and learning methods and assessment of student performance. The visitors also took this opportunity to talk to students about their Student Law Office experiences. The visitors also met with various criminal supervisors to discuss the work of criminal firms and looked at practical and ethical issues surrounding criminal clinics.

The visitors also sat in on Professor Philip Plowden's firm meeting to observe discussion of criminal cases, case strategies and to observe the approach taken by a criminal firm in the Student Law Office.

Students visiting from Durham Gilesgate Sixth Form

Students from Durham Gilesgate visited the Student Law Office on 21 October 2010 to see the type of work that the Student Law Office is involved with and to get an insight into life studying law here at Northumbria University. The students were given a tour of the Student Law Office, were involved in an exercise looking at ethical issues which may be encountered in the clinic and then attended a presentation in the court room. The current Year 4 students prepared all of the activities and hosted the visit, providing the students from Durham Gilesgate with a fantastic insight into life at university.



Visitors from Durham Gilesgate and the Year 4 students who hosted the visit

Visit by tribunal judge

We were delighted to host Judge Nick Moss, a full-time judge for the Social Security and Child Support jurisdiction. He spoke to students in the welfare benefits firms, giving them tips on presenting as an advocate at tribunals.

MP for Gateshead Ian Mearns

MP Ian Mearns visited the School on Friday 10 December 2010 at the invitation of Professor Plowden. He visited the Student Law Office where he was hosted by Director Carol Boothby and Associate Dean Kevin Kerrigan and had the opportunity to talk to students about their experience of the Student Law Office. Ian Mearns was interested in finding out more about the work



MP Ian Mearns with Kevin Kerrigan and Michael Stockdale

of the Student Law Office and the legal services which may be available to his constituents.

MP for Blaydon, Dave Anderson and MP for Sunderland, Julie Elliot

Labour MPs Dave Anderson and Julie Elliott visited the School on Friday 21 January at the invitation of Professor Plowden. The visitors attended the Student Law Office where they were hosted by Director Carol Boothby and Associate Dean Kevin Kerrigan and had the opportunity to talk to students about their experience of the Student Law Office. Both MPs had an interest in finding out more about the work of the Student Law Office and the legal services which may be available to their constituents.



MP Dave Anderson with Kevin Kerrigan and Carol Boothby



MP Julie Elliot with Kevin Kerrigan and Michael Stockdale

Student soundbite

What I enjoyed most about the Student Law Office was...

"Getting the chance to work within a team and forge friendships with students I had not spoken to before."

Gateshead Council visit

Gateshead Council's Head of Development, Law and Democratic Services, Martin Harrison and Head of Litigation, Deborah Hill were hosted by Student Law Office Director Carol Boothby and Associate Dean Kevin Kerrigan in November 2010. The Student Law Office advises the public on housing and benefit issues, and links with local authorities can be helpful. Also many students are interested in a career in local government, or even gaining experience through short-term placements, and their Student Law Office experience can make them a useful resource. Deborah and Martin visited the Student Law Office to see the environment in which students are supervised.

Visit from Justice for Children

(Rift Valley – Newcastle Justice Project)

Kenyan members of Justice for Children visited Northumbria School of Law on 11 May 2011. Justice for Children provides legal advice, training and representation for children and their families in the Rift Valley area of Kenya. It does this by funding an office and staff based in Nakuru in the Rift Valley Province. Each year the project directly helps over 2000 children and their families with legal problems and there is a growing demand for its services because the numbers of vulnerable children are increasing, children and their families are becoming more aware of their legal rights, and the work and success of the project is becoming more widely known. Please see the project's website for further details: www.jfckeny.org



Visitors from Justice for Children

In Kenya there is no legal aid or public funding for criminal or civil cases, other than for murder or treason. Children and young people generally have no access to legal help when they are involved in criminal matters or if they are in need of protection, care, or financial support.

The visitors, who were all lawyers carrying out pro bono work for Justice for Children, came to look at the facilities in the School and to discuss the work of the Student Law Office. The visitors took the opportunity to talk to students and staff in the Student Law Office and discuss the pro bono work that we are involved with. The School of Law was delighted to welcome the visitors and hopes to strengthen links between Newcastle and Nakuru and to provide professional development for project workers in Kenya.

Visit from Indiana State University



Ven Ogbebor with Elaine Campbell, Michael Stockdale, Sarah Morse and Kevin Kerrigan

On 4 July 2011 the School received a visit from a scholar based in the USA. Ven Ogbebor from Indiana State University in Indianapolis is currently based at the University of York on an intern exchange scheme and is particularly interested in international human rights. He visited the School to find out about our clinical legal education activity in the Student Law Office. He was particularly interested in our work advising and representing clients in the European Court of Human Rights, which is perhaps the most developed regional system of human rights protection. The Student Law Office has represented several clients in cases against the UK Government before the ECHR in the fields of welfare rights, education, family rights and criminal justice.

Ven was so interested in clinical legal education that he subsequently attended our international clinical legal education conference in Valencia on 11–15 July 2011.

The Student Law Office and Pro Bono Week – Law in the Quad

As part of National Pro Bono week, the Student Law Office offered free legal advice to staff, students and members of the public on Tuesday 9 and Thursday 11 November 2010. The Student Law Office was supported by a number of local firms including Eversheds, Irwin Mitchell and ILS Solicitors. Student Support and Wellbeing and the Students' Union supported the event by offering interview rooms.

Supervisors from the Student Law Office with the help of local firms were available to give on the spot, confidential legal advice on a range of legal issues including housing, employment, civil (including consumer), benefits and crime. Over the two days over 30 clients were seen and provided fantastic feedback:

"Very prompt, helpful and informative. Has answered many questions which I had. It was good to speak with people who are happy to help. Many thanks."

"Prompt, helpful service – appreciated the advice, thank you."

"Superb advice, very well informed, clarified many points previously unknown. Thank you."

"The advice we received was relevant and current. It was reassuring to find that there are places and people out there who can help."



Students involved in National Pro Bono Week

Case study

"Miss W and Miss K rented a property together. They paid a deposit jointly and following the termination of the tenancy the landlord refused to return the deposit. The Student Law Office advised Miss W and Miss K on bringing court proceedings against the landlord and were able to negotiate with the landlord for the full return of the deposit."

Staff visit New York universities

Dean Philip Plowden and Associate Dean Kevin Kerrigan visited City University of New York (CUNY) School of Law and were hosted by Professor Beryl Blaustone on Monday, 1 November and Tuesday, 2 November 2010. Professor Blaustone is the Visiting Professor of Teaching and Learning here at Northumbria School of Law and in that capacity has worked extensively with the School to promote exchange between our two law schools. Their visit increased the commitment by both law schools to expand our collaboration. During their trip to New York Philip and Kevin participated the defenders clinic and the mediation clinic and discussed the other clinics with faculty members. Excellent contacts were made and it was clear that there is a great deal of similarity between the two law schools' approaches to clinical legal education and pro bono work.

In February 2011, Director Carol Boothby together with supervisors Victoria Murray, Caroline Foster and Sarah Morse visited Professor Blaustone and her colleagues at City University New York, as well as Columbia University and New York University. They met with various members of staff, and at CUNY met students taking part in the Mediation Clinic, and the Community Enterprise clinic.



Associate Dean Kevin Kerrigan with Professor Beryl Blaustone in front of the statue of Lady Justice which was created by CUNY Law School



Carol Boothby, Victoria Murray, Caroline Foster and Sarah Morse at Columbia University New York

The Lemington Centre Drop-in Advice Day

On 27 January 2011, Student Law Office Director Carol Boothby and welfare supervisor Claire Cowell attended the Lemington Centre to provide free independent and confidential advice to members of the public. Areas of law covered included housing, consumer matters, welfare benefits, legal matters, debt, community care advice, family advice and employment. The event was organised by local advice agencies and members of the public were invited to attend the advice centre on a drop-in basis or could book appointments before the event.

Client Feedback

We ask all clients for feedback on our service, and here are just some of the comments we have had during this year alone:

'May I take this opportunity to thank you, Craig Heywood, John Swales and all your background administration staff for all your hard work and effort over the past seven months. The Student Law Office offers an exceptional service to the North East community. Without this service I most certainly wouldn't have been able to afford to take my previous employer to tribunal.

Once again thank you and long may the Student Law Office continue.'

What is the best thing about the service the Student Law Office provides?

- A discrete environment – I did not wish to be seen seeking legal advice against my employer by anyone I know.
- Students leave no stone unturned.
- As it is free it really helps to know that you are not running up bills you couldn't pay.
- They always keep you informed about the progress of your case.

- Everybody wins. The client gets free advice and better still; the students get to handle real cases which advances their learning.
- Professional service, clarity of procedures and information.
- I found the law students to be very friendly, helpful and professional.
- They explained everything in detail about what was going to happen and they also kept me up-to-date as things happened; they also explained things in words I knew.
- The advice was given free of charge but with a high level of professionalism.
- There was no one best thing. Everything was very good. The students were very polite, thorough and explained each step of the case in layman's terms and that it was easy to understand every step of the way.
- Fast and very friendly and reassuring.
- Apart from that it's free?! I was treated with respect despite the small monetary value of my claim.
- Assurance of professional-quality legal advice. Plus no charge – great because I have a very low income.
- Great advice and well explained legal procedures.
- Honest, good advice, backed by solicitors/barristers giving them solid backing.
- A free service with students face-to-face, able to research the legalities of the case and offer advice. The students Jason and Blair were very helpful and professional.
- Free of charge. Very informal and relaxed.
- Informative, helpful. Expectations set out realistically.
- Research is thorough and students are well informed. I had confidence in the service and the students kept me updated with progress made.

Irwin Mitchell Scholarship to New York

Megan McColgan was chosen by Irwin Mitchell to spend a month in New York on a scholarship to study law at the City University of New York (CUNY) in Queens and was given the opportunity to observe another legal system. During this scholarship Megan participated in the Criminal Defence clinic every Tuesday and Thursday which involved a three-hour seminar in small groups of about 20 students. Megan found the work that she undertook extremely valuable as it focused on issues such as lawyering skills and interview techniques which was important for Megan's transition into Year 4 here at Northumbria.

Megan also spent time at a mediation clinic and managed to attend two civil courts to watch mediation take place. One of these courts was a night court which was in stark contrast to the English legal system which is traditionally 9–5. Megan also



Megan at the top of the Rockefeller Centre

attended a criminal court in downtown Manhattan, where she had the opportunity to shadow a judge for the day and noted the significant differences in the American legal system in that there were no wigs, no cloaks and no bowing in American courts.

Megan during her time in New York also managed to fit in all of the main sights, including the Empire State Building, the Rockefeller Centre, the Statue of Liberty and Ellis Island, as well as the Museum of Modern Art. Megan also sampled the restaurants and the amazing shopping facilities that NYC has to offer. Megan describes the experience as “the most amazing experience ever” and would recommend it to all fellow students and would encourage all students to apply for the NYC scholarship with Irwin Mitchell.

Student soundbite

What I enjoyed most about the Student Law Office was...

“Receiving positive feedback from my clients in relation to the work and time I had put into their cases. Being in a position where I could help clients was very rewarding.”

Law Works Pro Bono Conference 2010

National Pro Bono week 2010 concluded with the annual Law Works student pro bono conference in Birmingham. The conference was sponsored by Clyde & Co, CMS Cameron

Case study

“Mr M was viciously attacked by unknown assailants following a night out with friends. He suffered a fracture of the orbital bone cavity of his right eye requiring two operations and leaving him with permanent scarring. Having been refused Criminal Injuries Compensation by the CICA the Student Law Office successfully helped Mr M appeal this decision. We represented Mr M at his hearing and he was awarded £2,200 in compensation as a result.”

McKenna, Reed Smith, The College of Law, BPP Law School, Kaplan Law School and LexisNexis. Students Mark Balmforth, Puja Malhotra and Matthew Townsley represented the School of Law at the conference.

The students were joined at the conference by Associate Dean Kevin Kerrigan who was a panellist for the ‘Where next for your pro bono conference?’ workshop. The workshop was for students and academics from institutions that had pro bono initiatives but were looking to develop these further.

The day consisted of a choice of four seminars covering a wide selection of different topics, from setting up a clinic (i.e. like our very own Student Law Office) to talks from Michael Naughton. Michael set up the Innocence Project which involves students assisting people who are serving prison sentences for crimes they maintain they did not commit.

“Overall, I have to say the conference was very useful to understand how much pro bono work is available to students, and would recommend students to go this conference if they are thinking about doing pro bono work in a different country, and especially to those students who are looking to take a gap year to gain some experience.”

Puja Malhorta, SLO student

“From this conference I felt that if I ever wanted to carry out pro bono work, I now fully understand whom I am able to contact and the opportunities that are and can be made available to me.”

Mark Balmforth, SLO student

“It was a most enjoyable and insightful day which gave us three budding pro bono lawyers many ideas for the development of the Student Law Office and beyond.”

Matthew Townsley, SLO student



Students Angela Dowse, Robert Marshall, Alexandra Olivier, Jessica Morris and Nicola Dennison, all presented at the Law Matters business forum

Law Matters

During February 2011 businesses met in the Corporate Hub at Northumbria University for an evening sponsored by the School of Law and organised by Newcastle Business Forum. This was part of a two-year project funded by the Higher Education Innovation Fund in collaboration between Newcastle Business School and Northumbria School of Law, with support and expertise from Angie McLean, local entrepreneur and business advisor – see her profile opposite.

Presentations from some of the students illustrated how the Student Law Office service has assisted local businesses both with advice and litigation. The workshop also highlighted some important legal themes with advice from local law firms. Matthew Rippon from BHP Law argued that protecting intellectual property should be part of every business plan. Later Amanda Maskery of Sintons LLP went on to describe the advantages and disadvantages of structuring business as sole traders, partnerships, limited liability partnerships and limited companies.

Angie McLean has been working with our students over the last two years. Angie is a well known local entrepreneur and has won a number of awards for her business achievements including ‘inspirational role model’ at the North East Entrepreneur of the Year Awards, Barclays Small Business of the Year in 1990, an award with *She* magazine as well as the Woman’s Entrepreneurial Award with *Cosmopolitan* magazine. She is a consultant and teaches marketing, entrepreneurship and small business management. We asked Angie about the HEIF project, ‘People Society and Business’, in which she worked with Northumbria law students, particularly in the Student Law Office.

What did you most enjoy about the project?

Working with such a professional organisation as the Student Law Office, which is able to offer practical, hands-on advice to the businesses to the mutual benefit of the students and the local business community. And of course I enjoyed working with the students who were eager and keen to learn.

What was the most challenging aspect of the project?

I was very impressed with the students I worked with, and wanted to transfer knowledge that would add to their career prospects for the future and to build confidence that they could achieve what they wanted to.

What has been the best moment of your career so far?

I have won awards for the work I have done with my own businesses including the National Small Business of the Year Award sponsored by Barclays Bank which is always good. However for me seeing others that I have worked with achieve in their businesses or career is very rewarding.

Who do you most admire in the business world?

Anita Roddick who started the Body Shop – she was the first recognised social entrepreneur and believed in ‘giving back’ – something which is dear to my heart.

If you had a ‘top tip’ for young people entering the world of business today, what would it be?

Slow gains are the ones that make you stronger in business as you learn the lessons in a controlled way – and nothing comes easy – if you work hard and keep your vision of where you want to be there is nothing that can stop you.



Angie McLean

Student soundbite

What I enjoyed most about the Student Law Office was...

“The ability to experience real live cases with real people behind them.”

Streetlaw

The Student Law Office Streetlaw project successfully ran a number of presentations to local schools, community groups and charities on various legal areas. Streetlaw is an initiative that began in America over 20 years ago and is a community legal education programme. As part of the project students drawn

from the final year of the exempting degree, the LPC, BPTC and GDL deliver presentations with the aim of informing the groups about aspects of law which affect their day-to-day lives, and in relation to areas of particular relevance to them.

The project is run in conjunction with Eversheds LLP whose lawyers meet with our students and offer guidance and support to improve their presentation and interpersonal skills.

In the academic year 2010/2011 the Streetlaw project had another successful year with 41 students delivering 10 presentations to groups including:

- Elders of Newcastle
- Newcastle Tenants Federation
- The Lawnmowers
- Wor Hoose
- NE1 Dizzy
- Victim Support Northumbria
- Hexham Queen Elizabeth High School
- Whitley Bay High School
- Monkseaton High School

Feedback from the host groups and students was excellent. As well as providing valuable information to the organisations and schools involved the project allows students to improve their research, organisational and presentation skills.

This is what Hexham Queen Elizabeth High School had to say about their presentation:

“The group had prepared a very interesting session, pitched at the right level with some good resources. They engaged well with the students and some very good discussion came out of the session – thank you!”

This is what NE1 Dizzy had to say about their presentation:

“The students were enthusiastic, polite, and very knowledgeable and we very much appreciated them coming to our meeting. Everybody learnt a lot.”

This is what student Sharanjeet Singh had to say about taking part:

“I think the presentation went well, the information and research that we did was very relevant and the host group seemed to appreciate it. I think it would be beneficial for students to do this type of talk because it builds your confidence and gives us a chance to speak

in front of an audience about an area of law that you feel confident about.”

This is what student Faith Rose Ansah had to say about taking part:

“I think I speak for everyone when I say we thoroughly enjoyed the programme. For me it brought a new awareness of the law as animal law was a subject I had never looked into. I would definitely recommend Streetlaw to other students as it has allowed us to broaden our knowledge.”

Case study

“Mr G was the victim of an armed robbery during the course of his employment. He suffered from Post Traumatic Stress Disorder following this incident lasting for almost two years at the date of hearing with symptoms expected to resolve slowly over many years. Having been refused Criminal Injuries Compensation by the CICA the Student Law Office successfully helped Mr G appeal this decision. We represented Mr G at his hearing and he was awarded £8,200 in compensation as a result.”

M Law: innovation in the training of future lawyers

The M Law (Solicitor) degree combines the undergraduate stage of legal education with the LPC and training contract. It is a five-year course whereby the students on the course undertake intensive Student Law Office work in their fourth year as part of their vocational training, together with a total of 18 months on placement (broken down into a three-month and 15-month placement) in either a legal firm or with a provider of legal services.

We currently have three students in the fifth year of the program, completing their 15-month placements, Robert Marshall (Watson Burton) Lee Russell (Ben Hoare Bell) and Fiona-Jayne Cartwright (Student Law Office). There are nine students about to commence the fourth year of the programme, who are currently on their three-month placement. They will commence their 15-month placement in 2012.

The intention is that this route will open up access for students into the legal profession, without compromising the rigour of the training experience.

Student soundbite

What I found the most useful from the Student Law Office was...

"The wide range of experiences that I have had. I have been able to interview and advise clients, conduct research, write letters to many different people from solicitors to clients and also experience what it is like in court. All of this experience means that as a trainee I will be aware of what is expected of me and so will be able to develop into an able solicitor much quicker."

Shelter project

Our joint project with Shelter has now completed its third year, enabling students to research and advise clients in writing on more complex housing queries, whilst gaining invaluable experience in the area of housing law.

Student Law Office judicial shadowing programme

This has been a very successful programme running from 2005 at North Shields County Court and kindly hosted by District Judge Large and his colleagues.

Following District Judge Large's retirement in 2010, District Judge Jackson very kindly agreed to take over the hosting, allowing the programme to continue. Around 30 students took part this year and gave excellent feedback:

"A fantastic opportunity. I was made to feel very comfortable and saw some very interesting cases."

"It's a really good experience because you rarely get to know what goes through a judge's head when making a decision but DJ Jackson talked us through it. It also helps you realise what judges expect from lawyers when putting forward a case. I found it very beneficial."

"If I had any advice for other students, it would be to take this opportunity; it's rare to get the opportunity to sit with a judge in a more informal manner than what we would expect to as solicitors. Perhaps you'll realise that judges are people too, and not as terrifying as they may appear."

"A really worthwhile visit, if only to see the other side. You probably won't get the opportunity to go into a judge's chamber all that often and it is an experience."

"We thank the judges and staff at North Shields for welcoming our students and giving them such a worthwhile experience."

New developments in the Student Law Office Environmental Law Project

From September 2011, the Student Law Office will be able to offer advice in the area of environmental law. The Environmental Law Project offers a free legal advice service to members of the public facing environmental legal issues including:

- Pollution and contamination
- Nuisance
- Noise problems
- Water pollution and resource issues such as discharge consents and abstraction licences
- Flooding
- Wildlife and countryside issues
- Waste
- Environmental prosecutions
- Air emissions such as dust and odours
- Public participation in planning and environmental decision making

The new clinic will be supervised by two new members of staff, Jennifer Stephens and Chris Simmonds.

Jennifer completed her training contract at Dickinson Dees LLP, qualifying as a solicitor in the Environment and Safety team in 2004. Jennifer advised a wide cross section of public and private sector clients on contentious and non-contentious environmental issues and became an associate in 2009. She has represented clients in a range of environmental matters and has experience of civil and



Jennifer Stephens

North East Legal Walk



criminal procedure in the Magistrates' Court, the Crown Court and the County Court. Jennifer also routinely advised clients on compliance issues as well as environmental risks arising in property, corporate and commercial transactions.

Chris joins the solicitor tutor team in the Student Law Office, and his background is outlined in the 'New staff in the Student Law Office' section overleaf. He has experience advising on planning applications that are of general environmental importance including developments in the open countryside and within designated Green Belt land.

He also has experience in all areas of planning enforcement, including Enforcement Notices, Breach of Condition Notices and Notices served under s.215 of the Town and Country Planning Act (in relation to land that is detrimental to the amenity of an area). Through his time in local government, Chris has also advised on various regulatory actions (including enforcement) in relation to statutory nuisances and drainage issues.

Chris has worked closely with other statutory bodies, including Natural England and the Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty Partnership for the North Pennines.

If you are interested in finding out more about this new clinic, please contact us on

la.studentlawoffice@northumbria.ac.uk

Case study

"The students in the Student Law Office drafted a management agreement for a client who was concerned that there was nothing in place to formalise his relationship with the band he was managing, known as 'The Watchers' despite him having effectively contributed to the band's success. The management agreement formalised the client's relationship with the band and protected his legal position."

North East Legal Walk

On 18 May 2011 staff and students from Northumbria University participated in the North East Legal Walk to raise money for the North East Legal Support Trust. The trust supports the work of not for profit and voluntary legal advice agencies based in the North East. Beneficiaries of the trust have included West Northumberland CAB, Alnwick CAB, Justice for Children Project, Darlington Association on Disability, Caring Hands and Newcastle Law Centre. This year the Legal Walk in Newcastle has raised approximately £5000.

New staff in the Student Law Office

We have two new solicitor tutors:

Elaine Campbell is a qualified solicitor who previously trained at Dickinson Dees LLP. On qualification in 2008, she joined Sintons LLP where she specialised in advising on non-contentious and contentious intellectual property matters, information technology law and drafting and negotiating complex commercial agreements. She joined the Student Law Office in March 2011 and will supervise business firms dealing with all aspects of business law including terms and conditions, website documents, commercial agreements, company law and intellectual property including trade mark registration and infringement actions.



Elaine Campbell

Chris Simmonds graduated from Northumbria University's LLB (Bar Exempting) degree in 2005. He subsequently worked as a paralegal specialising in housing law for Ben Hoare Bell Solicitors LLP until moving to Durham City Council in 2007 as a legal assistant. He qualified as a solicitor in 2008 and continued to work for Durham City Council as Assistant Solicitor specialising in Housing and Planning Law.

Case study

"The client wished to set up a charitable trust to assist with the costs of caring for sick and injured hedgehogs. The client was interested in raising awareness about hedgehogs and their overall decline and wanted to know what sources of funding may be available to such a charity. The students provided the client with advice and guidance on the necessary formalities to set up a charity. The students also provided the client with information surrounding funding and grants available to the charity."

Chris transferred to Durham County Council in August 2008 and was seconded to Chester-le-Street District Council where he handled all aspects of local government law until the dissolution of the District Councils in April 2009. He then continued to practice in housing and planning law for Durham County Council. Chris will supervise Student Law Office firms covering housing and planning law, civil, and will take over Kevin Kerrigan's firm dealing with crime.



Chris Simmonds

Jennifer Stephens is joining the Student Law Office team as a supervisor. Jennifer is a solicitor with experience in environmental law (see information elsewhere in the report on the new environmental clinic).

Sarah Fitzpatrick is making a welcome return to the Student Law Office to run a firm offering employment advice for employers.

Farewell to Colleen May, who returns full-time to the academic teaching team. Colleen has run a small business firm in the Student Law Office for some years, and will be missed.

Our administrator Laura has been on maternity leave after the birth of Charlie, and cover was provided by Jennifer Argent, who then decided to make a move into law herself by starting on the Graduate Diploma in Law course at Northumbria!

First M Law trainee joins Student Law Office

Fiona-Jayne Cartwright is the first trainee to come through the innovative M Law (Solicitor) programme, and completed her

double dose of Student Law Office as required under this new programme before joining the Student Law Office in May for her 15-month placement. Here she describes her experience:

How would you sum up your Student Law Office experience?

It was a major learning curve. It really opened my eyes as to how a solicitors' office operates and the procedures involved when running cases. To summarise, my time in the Student Law Office was demanding but highly rewarding.

What was your most enjoyable experience over the year?

I really enjoyed firm meetings, where students and their supervisor meet once a week in order to discuss the progress of cases. It was rewarding and motivating to see cases develop over the year and to know that we had made that progress happen.

How did the Student Law Office shape your future career choices?

The Student Law Office gave me the opportunity to experience areas of law I had not considered practising in before. For example I was placed in a housing firm, but had always been of the opinion that when I qualified I wanted to be a criminal solicitor. However I found housing law very interesting and this made me reassess my preferred practise area. I now keep an open mind as to which area I would like to qualify into. Now I am working in the Student Law Office I plan to take full advantage of the different training seats on offer.

Did you encounter anything unexpected during your time in the Student Law Office as a student?

A valuable lesson I learnt during my time in the Student Law Office is to expect the unexpected. There were a number of occasions where I anticipated a case would turn one way and it then took a completely different direction. It is therefore important to always be mindful of this and make sure you are prepared for any eventuality.

What did you find most difficult?

Pushing myself out of my comfort zone! However, I realised that this was something I needed to do if my practical legal skills were to develop. For example I was daunted by the prospect of representing one of my clients at court in relation to a housing matter. However, the experience really taught me a lot and it developed my understanding of the trial process dramatically.

What are you looking forward to the most in your period as a trainee?

I am really looking forward to experiencing areas of law I have not dealt with before and the diverse case load that will come



Fiona-Jayne Cartwright

with that. I always enjoy learning new things and enhancing my skills and feel the Student Law Office will provide me with the ideal environment in which to do so.

Conferences

International Journal of Clinical Legal Education/ Global Alliance for Justice Education Conference 11–15 July 2011

This year the IJCLE conference was held jointly with GAJE, as many of the themes and members are common to both groups. The venue was the beautiful city of Valencia and our hosts were the Universitat de Valencia. The theme was 'Combating Social Injustice Through Justice Education – Life, the Universe and Clinic: What questions does Clinic answer?'

- Kevin Kerrigan took part in a round table discussion on 'The New European Law Clinics'
- Jonny Hall presented 'Standardised Clients and Interviewing: Assessing the advice interview'
- Cath Sylvester presented 'Seeing the Wood for the Trees: How can we help students to research unstructured real client problems?'
- One of our postgraduate students, Kevwe Mary Omoragbon, presented on 'Student Assessment in Clinical Legal Education: A comparison of medical law and law clinic practice'
- Sarah Morse and Carol Boothby presented 'What is the role of the legal clinic and should it be influenced by the desire to achieve social justice?'

Clinical Legal Education Organisation Workshop

Kevin Kerrigan, Jonny Hall and Elaine Campbell attended this new event which was held on 15 and 16 June 2011 at the Galleries of Justice in Nottingham. Co-organised by Northumbria University, University of York and Nottingham Trent University, the conference brought together clinical educators,

pro bono co-ordinators and not-for-profit services to analyse the future of student law clinics in an era of major cuts to the scope of legal aid that will lead, on the Government's figures, to over half a million people going without legal help. At the conference, Kevin Kerrigan and Jonny Hall chaired a discussion entitled 'Clinic and Access to Justice: The role of the law school in the wider context of legal service provision and cuts in public funding'.

3 Rivers Consortium Conference

Carol Boothby and the Student Law Office bursary, Daniel Best, submitted a poster on the HEIF funded project 'People Society and Business'. The Student Law Office used the project funding to increase business awareness in the Student Law Office, through the work with local entrepreneur Angie McLean, and also through visits to other law clinics to look at their work with local businesses and not-for-profit organisation.

Employment law competition

Our annual Employment Advocacy competition took place in March 2011. Twenty-two students from employment firms within the Student Law Office took part. This event is kindly sponsored by Gordon Brown Associates with Jonathon Stokes, Partner, playing the role of our Employment Tribunal Judge. Students were asked to prepare and take part in a Pre-hearing Review, Case Management Discussion or Remedies hearing and prizes were awarded for 1st, 2nd and 3rd place for Best Advocate. 1st place was awarded to Megan McColgan who received her prize and certificate from Jonathon at a drinks reception on 5 April. The competition allows the students to gain valuable experience in a realistic setting and was a great success.

We would thank Jonathon and GB Associates for their continued support and sponsorship of this event.

Student soundbite

What I found the most useful from the Student Law Office was...

"The opportunity to hold real client interviews, as it has massively increased my confidence and communication skills."

Students have their day in court

In March 2011 law students had their day in court in a reconstruction of a day in the Magistrates' Court. Students participated in a number of mock hearings before a qualified Legal Clerk and local Magistrates with academic staff playing the part of clients and court ushers. The hearings included a bail application, a mode of trial hearing and a plea in mitigation with students adopting the role of prosecution and defence. This was an invaluable experience for the students and Judith Gowland, Senior Lecturer, commented "This was such a wonderful learning experience for the students who genuinely seemed to relish the challenge of conducting advocacy under the same pressures that a qualified solicitor would face. Everyone involved worked hard to ensure that the experience was as realistic as possible so that when these students graduate, they can walk into their first court hearing full of confidence. The Legal Clerk and Magistrates involved were extremely impressed with the high standards of advocacy."



Students Nina Marie Barlow and Andrew Sixsmith with local Magistrates and Clerk

Student soundbite

What I found the most useful from the Student Law Office was...

"The feedback and support from my supervisor has been the most useful in the year. It has allowed me to develop my skills. Each improvement has had a positive effect upon another skill and has enabled me to improve confidence in my abilities overall."

Clinic Research Day

Staff took part in a second research day with Professor Paul Maharg, SIF professor with a research background in experiential learning. Clinic staff discussed ideas for research projects and benefitted from feedback from colleagues.

Prizes

The David Gray prize for the highest Student Law Office mark went this year to James Thomas Donnelly.

A final note from our Director

We are proud of the achievements of all our students in the Student Law Office, and the contribution they are able to make to the local community. This year we recovered over £200,000 for clients, as well as helping many to access legal advice who would not otherwise be able to do so. With legal services facing the current harsh economic climate, this assistance will become even more important in future years. Winning the Attorney General's Award for best contribution by a law school, and also the National Training Awards UK award for provision in education and training has given us a great platform for the future – but as always thanks go to the everyday efforts of all the Student Law Office team.

Carol Boothby

The image shows a close-up, low-angle shot of a brick building facade. A large, three-dimensional logo is mounted on the wall. The logo consists of a silver, curved archway that frames the text. The text is rendered in a bold, sans-serif font and is also three-dimensional. The words "UNorthwestern" are stacked vertically, with "UN" on the top line, "orth" on the second line, and "western" on the third line. Below this, the word "University" is written in a smaller font size. The entire logo is set against a background of grey bricks. The sky is visible in the upper right corner, showing a clear blue color with a few white clouds.

UNorthwestern
University



www.northumbrialawschool.co.uk

Copies of this publication are available in alternative formats such as braille, large print, tape or disk. In the first instance please contact Karen Newton (Disabilities Adviser) for details.

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