

**YORK LAW SCHOOL**



**York Law School**

# **THE BARONESS HALE LEGAL CLINIC**

**Annual Report  
2015/16**

[york.ac.uk/law/the-baroness-hale-legal-clinic](http://york.ac.uk/law/the-baroness-hale-legal-clinic)

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# WHAT IS THE LEGAL CLINIC?

**The Legal Clinic is a free legal service for the public. The Clinic was started by Professor Richard Grimes at York Law School (YLS) in January 2011. Richard left YLS in July 2016 and we thank him for the Clinic's first five successful years.**



**In 2015/16, 54 students were involved with the Clinic as part of their studies. All work undertaken by the students is supervised by professionally qualified lawyers who ensure that the work carried out meets the high standards of service expected of a solicitors' practice. The Clinic provides much needed help for members of the public, whilst also supporting students to put their learning into practice and preparing them for their next steps in their legal careers.**

## Who can ask for advice?

**Anyone can ask the Clinic for help and we do not charge for our services**

We work with individuals, companies and communities to provide a free, professional and confidential legal service. We have supported clients who may struggle to find or afford legal advice. The Clinic has been able to provide its expertise into a range of areas including; family, employment, landlord and tenant disputes as well as creating charities and companies. Since the Clinic began, we have worked in schools, courts, tribunals and prisons. The Clinic has also collaborated with other service providers such as the Citizens Advice Bureau and other local legal services, both receiving referrals from and making referrals to these services.

We act for a wide range of clients in the local area and its surrounding communities. However, we have also attracted clients from further afield. As cuts continue to be made to Legal Aid entitlements, this has led to a general increase of unmet legal need and members of the public become more reliant on advice provided by services like the Clinic.

We try to help clients with their legal issues if we can. In cases where we are unable to help, we always explain why and refer on to specialist advisors where possible.

## The Clinic Process

Everyone in the Clinic follows a clear set of practice procedures. As a result, clients can expect to receive a high quality, confidential and professional service. These procedures reflect the workings and demands of any legal practice. We also aim to meet the University and Law School's educational standards for the students involved. All work undertaken by students is supervised by qualified solicitors with practising certificates. The University's Professional Indemnity Insurance covers the Clinic, thus providing further protection for clients, students and staff.

## STAGE 1: PRE-INTERVIEW

Everyone involved in the Clinic undertakes induction and training and are made aware of the relevant professional rules.

Students are allocated cases and work in groups – Student Law Firms.

Students meet with their supervisors before any interview to check they are fully prepared.

## STAGE 2: INTERVIEW

All client interviews are by pre-booked appointments.

Students meet with the client to find out key facts and explain the nature of the Clinic's service. No advice is given at this stage.

The Clinic solicitors, in discussion with the students, determine whether the case can be taken on and the client is informed.

## STAGE 3: ADVICE

If advice can be given, students research the legal issues involved and draft an initial advice letter.

Once the letter reaches the necessary professional standard with a Clinic solicitor's approval it is sent to the client.

The client is asked to provide feedback so that the Clinic can improve the service in the future.

Further work for the client is only carried out if the Clinic has the capacity. In many cases the client is referred on for specialist help.

## Comments from Clients

"I really appreciate and thank the students for their well laid out advice and honest opinion of my case."

"I just wanted to say thank you – the whole law school experience from start to finish has been so fast and professional! The students who interviewed me and gave me advice were fabulous. The advice I received, I would not have been able to afford whilst on maternity leave, or would not know myself."

"The service I received was very good. The students were extremely professional and welcoming. The advice has been very helpful and I would recommend the clinic to others!"

# EXAMPLE CASE STUDIES

## Case Study 1

Our client had designed and began producing a new form of smart technology. The client was seeking legal advice on how to complete an application for a patent and creating legally binding contracts for investors of the product. The Clinic was able to provide detailed instructions on how to complete a patent application, and also advised the client to consider a shareholder agreement for investors.

## Case Study 2

Our client joined a local credit union paying regular membership payments. The client then requested a cash loan from the credit union which was initially agreed by an advisor. The client advised the credit union that the loan was for travel costs to hospital, at which the client was receiving cancer treatment. The credit union later told the client he was not entitled to a cash loan, only a "white goods" loan. The client felt the credit union had acted in a discriminatory way after learning the client was receiving treatment for cancer. The Clinic was able to write a draft letter for the client to send to the credit union, and also provided advice on how to raise the issue with the Financial Ombudsman Service, should the credit union be unable to resolve the matter to the client's satisfaction.

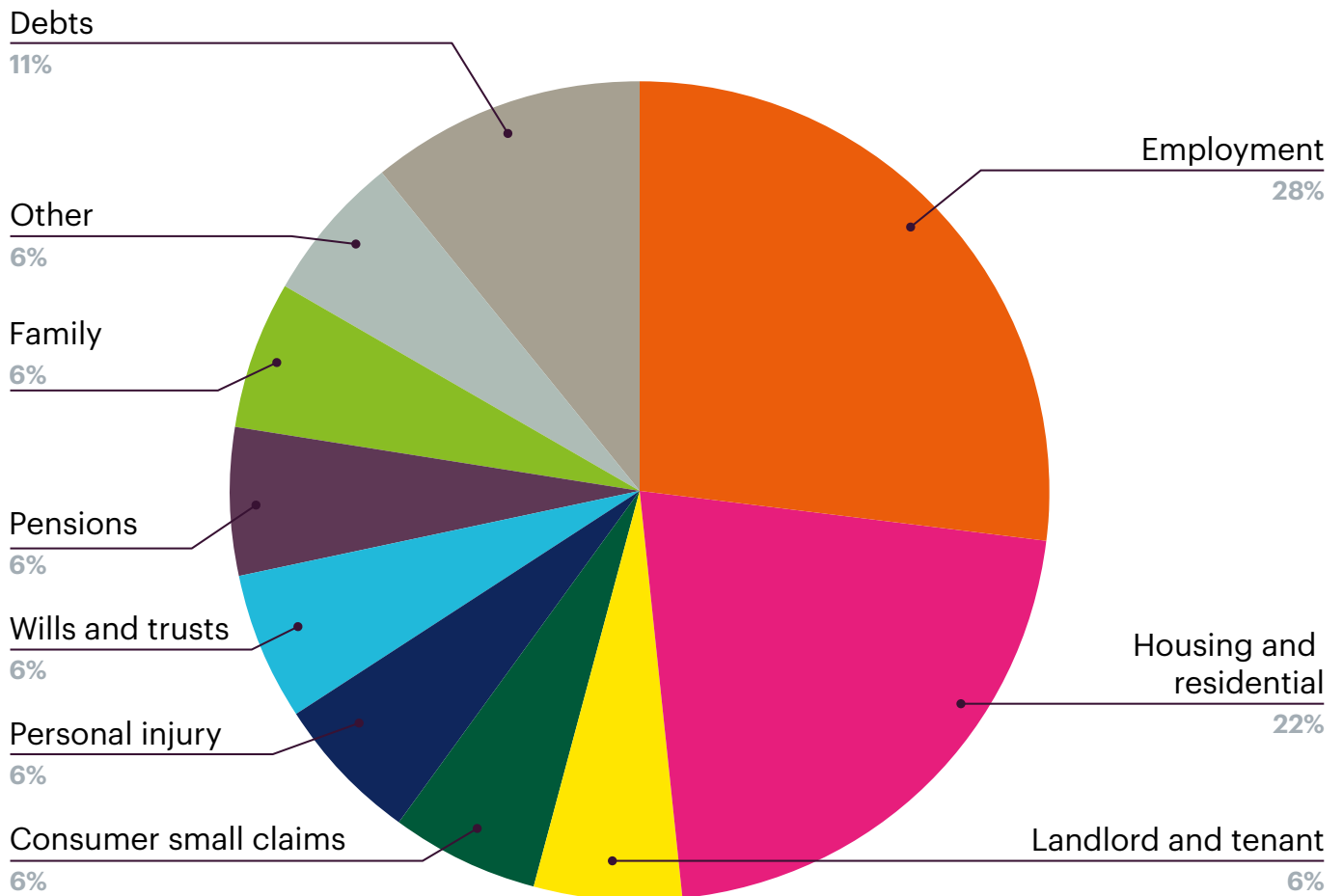
## Case Study 3

Our client was seeking legal advice as she wished to make contact with the father of her child to request child maintenance. Having been estranged from her child's father for almost 12 years, our client learned that the child's father had died a couple of years ago. Our client sought advice from the Clinic to see if financial provisions could still be made even after the passing of the father. The Clinic offered to write a letter to the father's executor to ask if any funds were set aside for the child in the Will and if not, attempt to arrange financial provision for the child as an alternative to proceeding to claim via the courts.

## Case Study 4

Our client was seeking legal advice when a negative reference from a previous employer was preventing the client from finding new employment. The Clinic researched the case to assess whether the client would be able to take her former employer to court for providing a reference that was deemed to be unfair and inaccurate. The Clinic advised the client she could pursue her former employer in court or attempt negotiation to recover compensation for a loss of earnings.

## Clinic cases 2015/16



Total number of cases for 2015/2016 = 40

## Student self-evaluation

"I enjoyed the diversity of different topics undertaken in cases, and looking at areas of law which I had perhaps not studied before."

"Clinic has been of huge benefit educationally but also so rewarding on a moral level – it's great to feel helpful."

"This was my first interview in Clinic, so I enjoyed building up the first relationship with the client. When it came to the research and drafting, it felt more meaningful as I genuinely felt I was making a difference and really helping the client after the initial meeting."



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