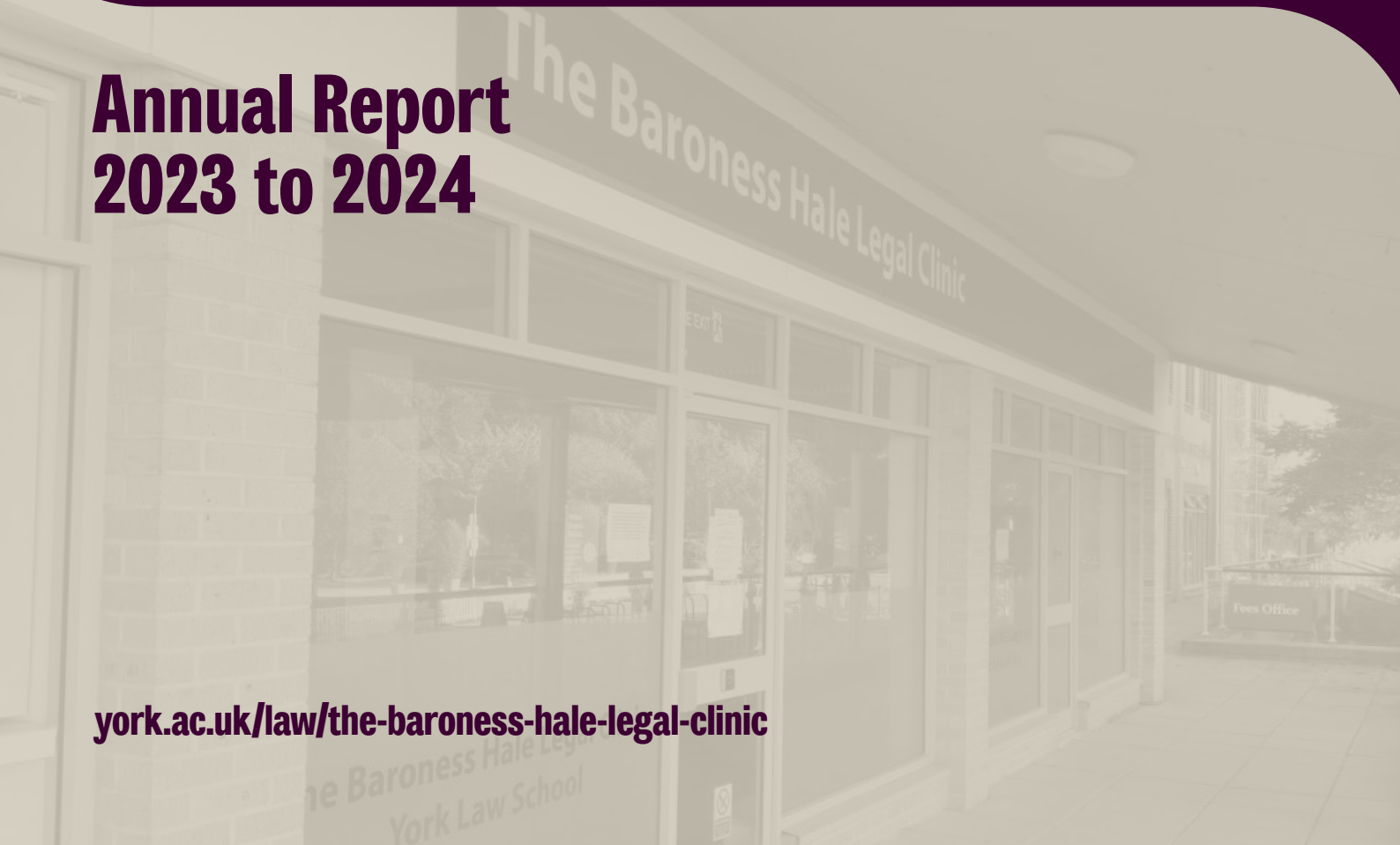


THE BARONESS HALE LEGAL CLINIC

**Annual Report
2023 to 2024**

york.ac.uk/law/the-baroness-hale-legal-clinic



WHAT IS THE LEGAL CLINIC?

The Legal Clinic is a free legal service for the public that opened its doors in 2011. In 2023 to 2024, 73 final year UG Law, UG Law and Criminology students and 10 PG Law students were involved with the Clinic as part of their studies. All work done 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 clients, 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 community organisations 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 in a range of areas including; family, employment, consumer and landlord and tenant disputes, as well as offering advice on creating charities and setting up companies. Since the Clinic began, we have advised more than 575 clients and have worked in schools, courts, tribunals and prisons. The Clinic has also collaborated with other service providers such as Citizens Advice and other local legal services, both making and receiving referrals.

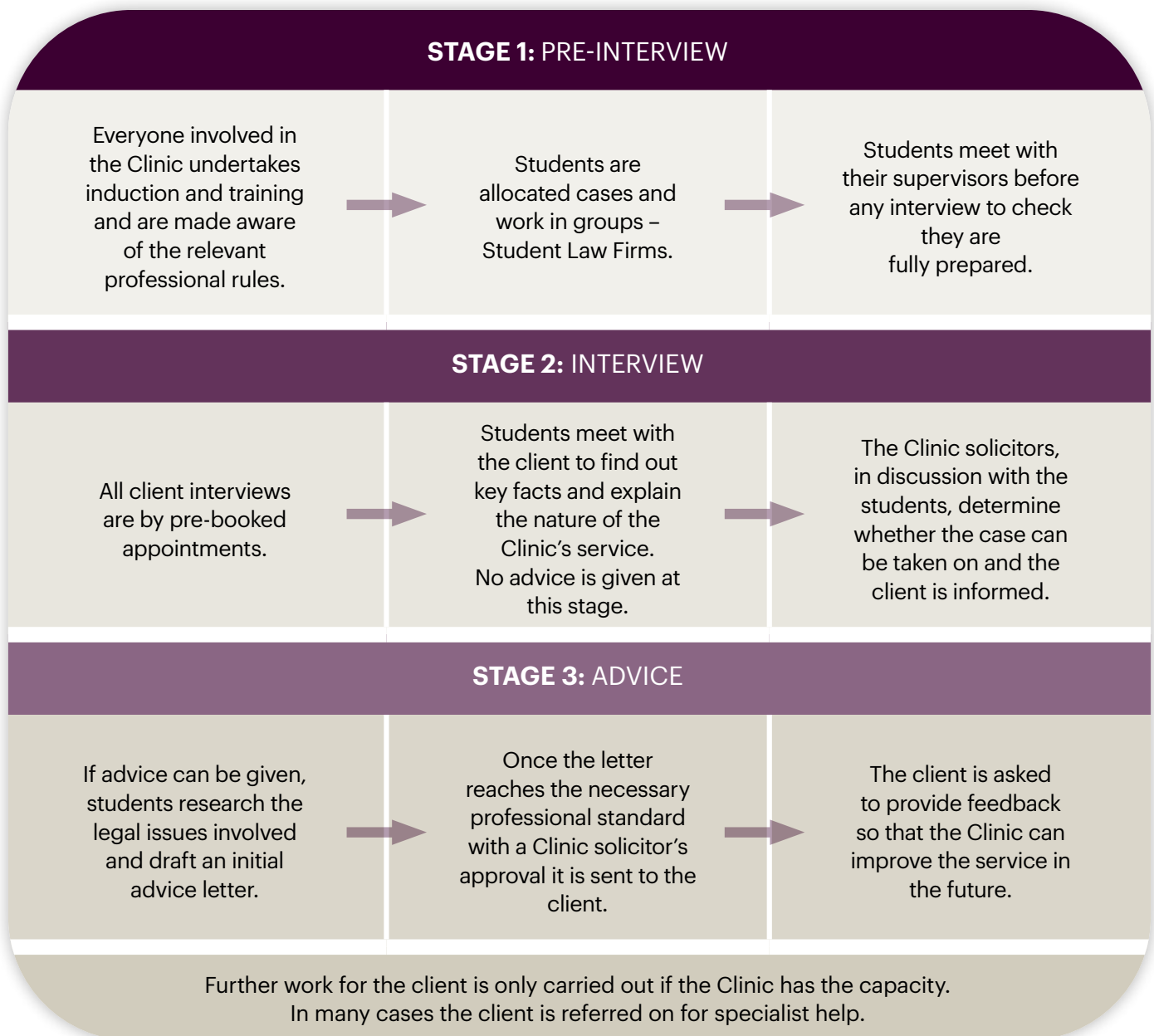
Most of our client interviews are held face-to-face in our purpose-built Law Clinic office and most of our clients came from York and the surrounding community. Face-to-face client interviews give our students the experience of meeting clients in person.

We try to help clients with their legal issues if we can. Following cuts to Legal Aid entitlements, there has been a general increase in unmet legal need and members of the public are becoming more reliant on advice provided by services like the Clinic. In cases where we are unable to help, we always explain why and refer on to specialist advisors where possible.

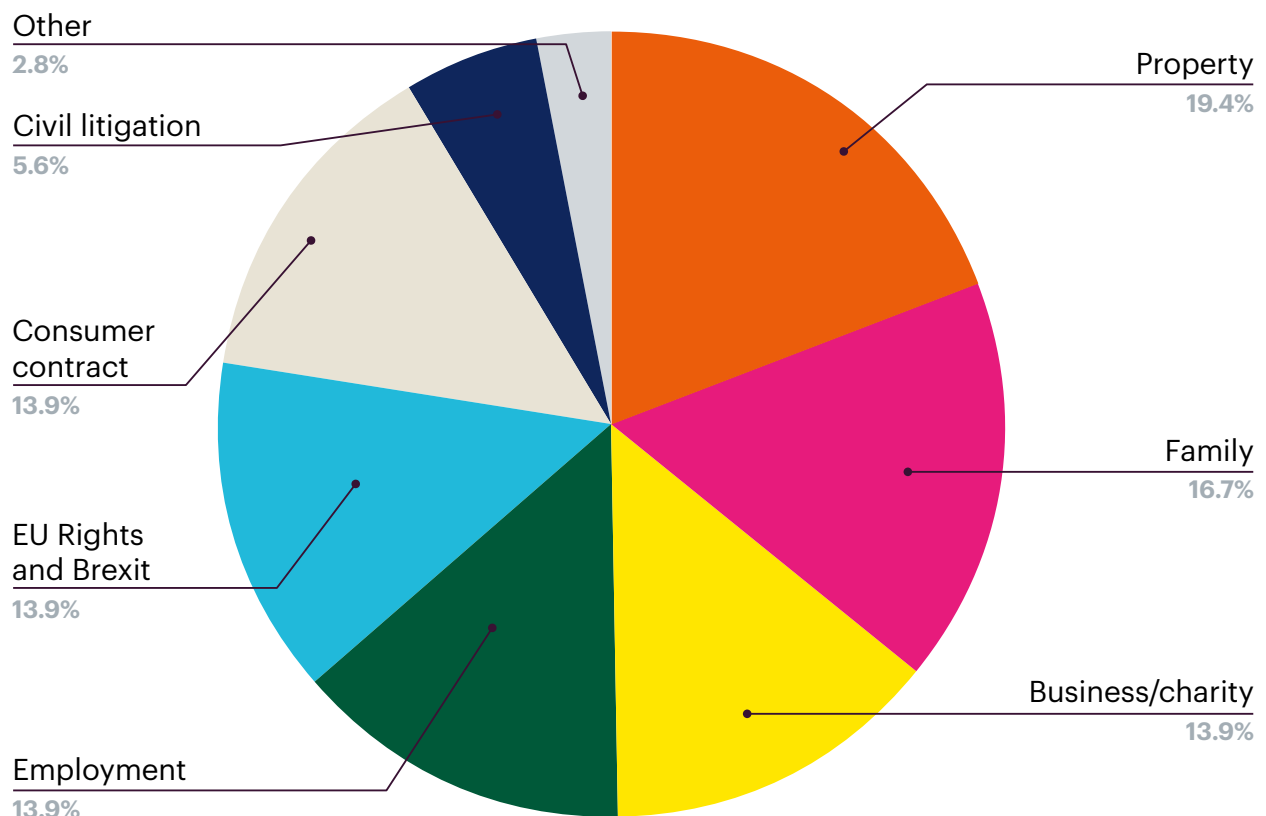
In 2023 to 2024, **73** final year UG Law, UG Law and Criminology students and **10** PG Law students were involved with the Clinic as part of their studies.

The Clinic Process

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



Clinic cases 2023 to 2024



Total number of cases for 2023/24 = 36, including 4 Business/Charity cases handled by our Small Business Clinic.

Student self-evaluation

“What I found most enjoyable about the Clinic module was the opportunity to engage directly with clients and their unique situations. Each case presented its own set of challenges, requiring careful analysis and creative problem-solving. It was immensely gratifying to see how our efforts could make a tangible difference in people’s lives.”

“In this case I felt that I was actually helping a vulnerable individual find a solution for the very difficult situation which he found himself in. Hopefully with the advice we have given him he will be able to repair the damage done to his home and get some of his money back.”

EXAMPLE CASE STUDIES:

Case Study 1

Family – Our client was in a dispute with their ex-partner about a parenting plan as they began divorce proceedings. The couple had an existing Parenting Plan and our client wished to know what their options were surrounding a possible child arrangement order (CAO). We advised on the difference between these options.

Case Study 2

Consumer – Our client engaged a company to fix their roof. The product used by the firm was faulty and caused damage to our client's home. Neither the installation company nor the company that made the defective product would accept liability. We advised the client on liability as well as how to seek mediation to resolve the dispute and how to make a claim through the small claims court.

Case Study 3

Property/Wills – Our client came to us to discuss the estate of their late father. The final will had been changed to amend the named executor and there were concerns about how some property had been valued and how trustees were acting. We advised our client on the process for contesting a will, how to challenge a trust and how to remove an executor.

Student self-evaluation

"I really enjoyed the problem solving aspect of this case. Our client provided us with a huge amount of documents so trying to piece the story together and then figure out what the legal issues were was really interesting."

"The ability to have a supervisor with knowledge on the topic area benefitted my understanding of interview skills as well as professional writing."

Comments from Clients

"We thought that the service was excellent. Thank you to all the students and staff members who gave us a highly detailed and organised advice letter. We really appreciate that the clinic highlighted potential arguments the other side could make against us, and how we could respond. This has made us feel more confident in our case."

"The students were patient and understanding during the whole process. They took a lot of information and applied it so competently. Now, all I have to do is to present their letter to help my client's case. It is such an amazing project, I cannot say enough wonderful things about it!!!"

"The advice the students gave me was extremely thorough, clear, and very informative – it allowed for me to understand the full scope of my legal rights and the actions I needed to take."

"The legal advice is excellent. I should like to record my profound thanks to the team who undertook the work on my case."

OTHER CLINIC ACTIVITIES IN 2023 TO 2024

Supporting litigants in person in the Family Court (CLOCK)

During 2023 to 2024, 15 students were involved with the Family Court Community Legal Companion Scheme, which is delivered in partnership with York St John University as part of the CLOCK network (Community Legal Outreach Collaboration Keele). Our law students were trained as Community Legal Companions to assist people who have no legal representation and need help with a family matter, such as going through a divorce or separation, or preparing for child arrangement proceedings. Working in pairs, students attended a help desk in York Family Court and helped with form filling, explaining court processes and signposting to local charities and law firms.

Small Business Clinic

With the support of Ward Hadaway LLP, the Small Business Clinic continues to offer initial advice to new and small businesses, as well as to current students thinking about setting up a business of their own. Small businesses are very often operating on tiny budgets and small margins, and as such they are often unable to pay commercial rates for legal advice. They are also sometimes overlooked by free legal advice providers, whose focus on social justice issues means they do not offer business support. Small businesses, however, are often key to the economic health of our towns and cities and can play an important role in revitalising neglected or run down parts of a community. Issues that we have advised on have included the impact of General Data Protection Regulations on the collection of data about a client's health; the most appropriate corporate vehicle for a new business; and the meaning of a non-disclosure agreement. In 2023/24, the Small Business Clinic gave advice to clients on issues such as the appropriate legal structure for a new charity; funding arrangements for a multi-academy trust; and dealing with an inactive shareholder in a small company.

The Housing Hub

In January 2023, in collaboration with UoY's Student Life and Wellbeing team, we launched the Housing Hub offering housing advice to University of York students. In October 2023, the Housing Hub trained 8 YLS student volunteers to act as tenancy contract checkers offering a weekly drop-in service to any students yet to sign their contracts. The Housing Hub also offered a separate drop-in service with the Student Hub Housing Advisor providing guidance and information on general queries about private accommodation.

The EU Rights and Brexit Hub

The EU Rights and Brexit Hub (EURBH) is located in the Legal Clinic on campus. The EURBH started as a three-year ESRC funded project (2020-2023) and continues to operate its second-tier advice clinic investigating how Brexit affects EU/EEA nationals' access to public services in the UK. Since the project began, the Hub has received over 250 queries and supported individuals to access the public services they are entitled to. The Hub also aims to build knowledge and train advisers across the UK on issues related to EEA nationals and their families' rights in the UK through blogs on topics such as strategic litigation updates and the policy work of the EURBH and the creation of adviser resources. In the past few years, Clinic students have been given the opportunity to collaborate with EURBH researchers. Our students considered enquiries from second-tier advisers, i.e. those who advise clients, about interpreting and understanding the rights of EU/EEA nationals to access welfare benefits in the UK. A new module, focusing on these cases, the Migrants' Rights: Law and Policy Clinic, is in development and will run for the first time in Semester 1 2024/25.

Global Day of Action for Climate Justice

GDA 5 – Right to a healthy climate

In November 2023, the Baroness Hale Legal Clinic at York organised a panel discussion incorporating speakers across the university. The focus of the conference was healthy rivers and drinking water.

We were joined by experts from a range of departments, with speakers including: Paul Powlesland – barrister and environmental activist; Marilou Verano Garcia – Human Rights Defender from the Philippines; Kelly Redeker – biologist; Judith Krauss – politics, with projects in Nicaragua; Pier Parisi – York Law School with recent experience working in Colombia; Alice Mary and John Dickson – lawyers from Uganda. We touched upon varying topics, from the River Foss that runs through York to the personhood of rivers in countries like Colombia.



Letter Writing Clinic with Access Social Care

In spring 2024, YLS worked with Access Social Care (ASC), a charity that provides free legal advice and support to people in England to get the social care they are entitled to. Eleven UG Law student volunteers were trained to run weekly Letter Writing Clinic (LWC) sessions. ASC sourced clients and our students supported each client to complete a letter to their local authority requesting appropriate social care provision be implemented. Five clients were supported in the Letter Writing Clinic in spring 2024.

Visitors to YLS and Clinic

In September 2023, York Law School welcomed two students from the Law Development Centre in Kampala, Uganda – Alice Nakasinde and John Ainembabazi. Alice and John were postgraduate bar students and were in York on a two week placement to learn more about Clinical Legal Education and to observe PBL workshops. They also joined Clinic casework activity.



Clinic colleague news

In spring 2024, our Clinic Solicitor, Sara Boulton, welcomed a new addition to her family, baby Sofia.



york.ac.uk/law/the-baroness-hale-legal-clinic

University of York
York
YO10 5DD
United Kingdom

Report drafted by: Francess Daly
Additional drafting by Stephen Levett and Alice Welsh
Edited by: Stephen Levett