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Student Law Office

Annual Report

2011–2012



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Welcome to Northumbria School of Law



Foreword by Kevin Kerrigan, Executive Dean

Here's an astonishing fact: The Student Law Office this year recovered nearly £400,000 in compensation and benefits for its clients. This record figure confirms this model as a paradigm of learning in action. The students who provide this service engage with the law in a deep and meaningful way. Not only do they learn the knowledge and skills of their role as future professionals but they do this in a way that offers real insights into the notion of serving clients and provides real impact in the community of which the university is part. The Student Law Office transforms the lives of its students and its clients.

I am delighted that the achievements of the staff and students is increasingly recognised on a national and international stage. Awards success this year came in the shape of short listing for the Lawyer Awards as 'best pro bono team', and for the Attorney General's Pro Bono Awards for Best Contribution by a Law School. Most significant though was the Student Law Office triumph in the prestigious Law Society Excellence Award for 'Excellence in Community Investment' where it faced and beat stiff competition from major global law firms such as Hogan Lovells LLP and Freshfields Bruckhaus Deringer LLP. It is also satisfying to note that in July the School of Law attracted 185 delegates from 25 countries around the world to its international conference on clinical legal education, confirming its growing reputation as a centre of excellence in this mode of learning.

The Student Law Office embarked this year on a range of new pro bono projects which make a key contribution to the provision of free legal service to the local and wider community. These new projects add to the range of student experiences available, as well as offering innovative and valuable free community legal resources.

The new Environmental Law Project ("ELP") offers free legal advice and representation to members of the public, community groups and other organisations on a range of environmental and planning issues, working with groups such as the Environmental Law Foundation and the Legal Sector Alliance.

Legal Advice Byker, our new outreach clinic in the East end of Newcastle, supported by leading local firm Ben Hoare Bell, has enabled students to gain valuable experience whilst expanding the availability of pro bono advice. Our thanks go to partner, Jeff Dean, and the solicitors at Ben Hoare Bell who have worked with our students to provide this service.

The launch of the LawWorks North East Pro Bono Hub

through the School of Law is encouraging and facilitating the provision of pro bono legal services across the North East of England, enabling law firms to engage with the local community through the provision of free legal advice and other forms of support.

These achievements are a result of the commitment of staff and students to the work of the Student Law Office. Over 188 students took part in our pro bono advice work, supervised by 21 lawyers conducting over 322 ongoing cases. Special thanks go to Dawn, Laura and our admin and support staff who work on a day to day basis with our clients and students and ensure the smooth running of the office.

Thanks to our partners who have supported the work of the Student Law Office and the Law School, including those firms who have provided training placements as part of our M Law programme, as well as our various community partners such as Age UK, Victim Support and Shelter.

My congratulations to Nikita Bos who won not only the David Gray Solicitors prize for the best performance in Student Law Office but also the Philip Plowden Prize for Best Student in the area of Criminal Law in the Student Law Office. Congratulations also to Laura Kirkpatrick who is this year's Irwin Mitchell LLP Scholar and will travel to City University New York in September to work under the supervision of one of our visiting Professors, Beryl Blaustone.

Finally, I am delighted to announce that one of our valued alumni, Mr W.T. Woon, based in Singapore and Durham, has added to his already significant contribution to the School by offering 3 further Scholarships for Student Law Office students to enable travel in the UK and abroad to work with lawyers, NGOs and pro bono projects. Lydia Burnside Hughes, Kirsty Adamson and Victoria Jones will be travelling to Singapore this summer to undertake internships with law firms and participate in public interest work.



The Student Law Office

This is Northumbria University Law School'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 MLaw degree course which integrates the professional skills of the Legal Practice Course into the new Masters level degree. We have 19 members of academic staff – a mix of qualified solicitors and barristers, plus one caseworker, two full-time equivalent 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.

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 please visit our website at www.studentlawoffice.co.uk or email us at la.studentlawoffice@northumbria.ac.uk

Facts and figures 2011/2012

Students involved in the Student Law Office:

Year 3 – 199
Year 4 – 152
Elective students – 24
Total students working in the Student Law Office last year in live client programme – 188
Graduate Diploma in Law students in Shelter project – 12

Cases:

New enquiries – 784
New and existing cases conducted – 322

Compensation recovered for clients:

£387,564.97
No. of staff involved – 21

Areas of law:

Civil litigation including consumer and CICA appeals
Crime and criminal appeals
Employment
Housing
Welfare benefits
Environment and planning
Family, business and commercial

Our community partners:

Age Concern
Shelter
Victim Support

Awards

Northumbria University scoops top prize at Law Society Awards

Northumbria University School of Law competed against Magic Circle law firms and was victorious in winning a prestigious award at the Law Society Excellence Awards held in London on 18 October 2011.

The Student Law Office was the overall winner in the category of 'Excellence in Community Investment', which recognises best practice and innovation in community investment including fundraising and charitable giving, pro bono and non-legal volunteering.



Carol Boothby and Kevin Kerrigan accept the Excellence award

The nomination was based on the huge amount of staff and student time devoted to offering a free legal service for the community as part of its Student Law Office clinical legal education programmes.

Shortlisted for Lawyer Awards and Attorney General's Pro Bono Awards

This contribution to the local community has enabled the Student Law Office to be shortlisted this year for the Lawyer Awards as 'best pro bono team' and for the Attorney General's Pro Bono Awards for Best Contribution by a Law School.

Feedback from clients

"I would like to thank both you and Katie for the professionalism in the way you dealt with our case. This is of course on top of an already heavy workload you have with your studies. I hope that a commendation is written on your university records stating the help and support you both gave during our discussions which were a great assistance to myself and my husband."

"If it had not been for the Student Law Office I would never have achieved what I did, this was a very, very difficult part of my life but the students helped me so much and they are a credit to the Student Law Office."

"The case was researched thoroughly and fed back to me professionally. I felt the whole procedure was conducted very competently."

"Attentive professionals who can empathise with the client. The service is the best. Keep it up!"



(Left to right) Caroline, Paul, Sarah, Kevin, Carol, Claire and Jonny

“Had the ability to talk on our level to help us to understand the terminology and make us feel at ease with the whole situation.”

“Thorough, well-presented and easy to understand. Excellent service from two very promising solicitors! Thank you.”

“Being unused to legal matters, having a professional guiding me through events, explaining at every stage what may or may not be possible, was an enormous support.”

“Thank you for your endless team of students for the great work you have done. Thank you for your patience, commitment and professionalism over the last few years. Many thanks.”

Case studies

Mr J was advised by the Student Law Office. The issue was a financial settlement relating to divorce and in particular, problems over the former matrimonial home. Prior to coming to the Student Law Office, he had attempted to sort this out himself with no success, and to use his words felt ‘bamboozled’ by his wife’s solicitor.

With the help and support of the Student Law Office, Mr. J and his ex wife were encouraged to attempt mediation. The students ‘held his hand’ throughout this process and mediation resulted in the settlement of all matters between him and his ex wife being he gained full equitable and legal interest in the former matrimonial home in lieu of a lump sum to his wife.

“Thanks for your constant help - I like your excellent students and thought it was all well done.” (Mr J)

The Student Law Office advised a landlord who had not been paid rent by his tenant for over six months. We explained how to regain possession of the property legally, and advised of his obligations in relation to aspects such as the tenant’s deposit and payment of bills and council tax.

“The best thing about the service provided is that your case is regarded seriously and sensitively, and followed up with sensible and practical advice.”

SLO Visits

Durham Uni RAG advice session

We were invited by Durham University to present at the national conference for RAG organisers on 7 September 2011. In the session, Solicitor Tutor Elaine Campbell looked at the requirements and implications of new rules brought in by the Charities Act 2006 and what this would mean for Students’ Unions and RAG committees associated with those Unions and student fundraising activities in general.

Visit of HH Judge Philip Sycamore and Judge John Aitken from the first tier tribunal

The Student Law Office was delighted to receive a visit on 28 September 2011 from these two highly respected judges from the first tier tribunal. They met with Student Law Office staff, heard about the work of the Student Law Office, and discussed future developments in the tribunal system.

Kevin Kerrigan’s visit to Parliament to speak at the AG’s domestic pro bono committee

On 14 September 2011 Kevin Kerrigan made a presentation at Westminster to the Attorney General’s domestic pro bono committee about the state of clinical legal education and the contribution it can make to the promotion of pro bono. Dominic Grieve, the Attorney General, and Edward Garnier, the Solicitor General, were present and subsequently Edward Garnier kindly agreed to launch the School’s LawWorks North East Pro Bono Hub in December.

Professor Lawrence Grosberg

Professor Lawrence Grosberg, of New York Law School, visited the Student Law Office on 16 September 2011 to look at the facilities available to students. As Director of New York Law School Lawyering Skills Centre, Professor Grosberg shares a similar belief that law schools should continue to experiment with new methods of teaching to better reflect legal practice in real life. Professor Grosberg also works with student lawyers in New York Law School's clinical and skills classes, including the Civil and Human Rights Clinic, the Mediation Clinic, and the Elder Law Clinic, providing student legal advice and representation under his supervision.



Carol Boothby and Professor Lawrence Grosberg

Case studies

Mr D was an overseas student who signed a joint tenancy for a property with other overseas students. One of the other tenants left and he was held responsible for that tenant's rent.

He was seen at the Legal Advice Byker project run as part of the Student Law Office, and we provided him with detailed advice which enabled him to successfully defend the claim.

The Student Law Office advised a well-known bar and brasserie in respect of its name. We advised on prospective trade mark infringement and passing off actions. We then registered the brand as a trade mark – protecting the unique name of the restaurant against anyone who wished to copy it. The client was so pleased with our service he came back to the Student Law Office for further advice when he decided to open a new establishment.

Stephen Hughes MEP

Stephen Hughes MEP visited the University on 7 October 2011. Mr Hughes is a Labour MEP representing 2.5 million people in the North East region of England in the European Parliament. The focus of Mr Hughes' work has been on the better rights and protection of workers and their families within Europe and beyond.

Mr Hughes delivered a lecture entitled 'Employee Rights as Human Rights in the European Parliament,' discussing the importance of Human Rights in the workplace and the link between European employment regulations and the working conditions of millions of workers in the United Kingdom. Afterwards, he spoke to Helen Williamson and Fiona Cartwright, trainees from the Student Law Office, about their work.

Khaled Chowdhury

Mr Khaled Chowdhury visited the Student Law Office on 19 October 2011. Mr Chowdhury is a barrister, graduating with the BVC at Northumbria University in 1997 and is also Head of Laws at the London College of Legal Studies in Dhaka, Bangladesh.

The LCLS in Dhaka runs a small pro bono legal clinic dealing mainly with public interest cases and some student legal enquiries. During the visit, Mr Chowdhury had a tour of the Student Law Office and was able to see how the clinic in our University functions in providing free legal advice.



Mr Chowdhury and Chris Simmonds



(Left to right) Jonny Hall, Carol Boothby, Maxim Tomoszec

Professor Maxim Tomoszec

Professor Maxim Tomoszec from Palacky University, Olomouc, Czech Republic, visited the School during the week commencing 14 November as part of an Erasmus teaching mobility award. He spent time teaching and observing Public Law and the Student Law Office sessions.

Croatian students/University of Zagreb

Colleagues and students from the University of Zagreb, Croatia visited Northumbria School of Law on 25 October 2011. The visit, arranged by the Foreign and Commonwealth Office and sponsored by the British Embassy, took place over two days and allowed the visitors to gain an insight into the Law School's hugely successful clinical legal education scheme. The visitors took part in various sessions including a panel discussion comparing clinical legal education experiences and a staff seminar comparing Eastern and Western European approaches to clinical legal education. They also spent time in the Student Law Office observing students preparing their case work and informally discussing their experiences. Northumbria School of Law is a leader in the field of clinical legal education.

Sarah Morse, Elaine Campbell, Jonny Hall, Kevin Kerrigan, Carol Boothby, Victoria Murray and Claire Cowell (all of Northumbria University Law School) and Kevin McCormack (British Embassy) and staff and students of the University of Zagreb



Durham Gilesgate Sixth Form

On 24 November 2011 the University hosted a visit by a group of students from Durham Gilesgate Sixth Form. Northumbria Law students delivered a presentation which provided an insight into the work of the Student Law Office. The visit also included a tour of the Law School and the Student Law Office. A mock trial was performed in the Court Room by the Law students and Sixth Form students enacting a part of the recent trial of Michael Jackson's Doctor. The Sixth Form students were also able to speak to the Law students about University and ask any questions they had about studying Law at Northumbria.

Richard Grimes

Colleague and well known exponent of clinic, Richard Grimes, visited the Law School and the Student Law Office in January 2012. Richard provided an excellent staff session on problem-based learning, and also joined some of the firm meetings in the Student Law Office. Richard joined the York Law School in August 2010 as Director of Clinical Programmes.

Solicitor General Visit



With Kevin Kerrigan (Executive Dean of Law), Lucy Winskell (Pro Vice-Chancellor), Hugh Welch (Senior Partner of Muckle LLP), Edward Garnier (Solicitor General) and Roger Wiltshire (Chief Counsel of BAE Systems and Trustee of Law Works)

Solicitor General Edward Garnier visited the University on 1 December 2011 for the launch of the Law Hub. Mr Garnier was able to speak to fourth year law students about their experiences in the Student Law Office and offer some useful career advice.

Soundbite

'Our visitors were enormously impressed by your approach and what you have been able to achieve and there are so many things that they saw and heard which was of interest to them.'

Kevin McCormack, British Embassy in Croatia



(Left to right) Alan Ball, Gavin Jones, Mark Balmforth, Katherine Olive, Kristina Jackso, Elaine Campbell (solicitor tutor), Danielle Robson, Lucy Scott-Moncrieff

Vice President of the Law Society, Lucy Scott-Moncrieff

The Student Law Office was delighted to welcome the Vice President of the Law Society, Lucy Scott-Moncrieff, who visited the office before delivering the Eldon lecture on 8 December 2011. Lucy spoke to some fourth year Student Law Office students about their experiences with clients, and passed on useful career tips. In her lecture, Lucy spoke about the future of the profession with the cuts to legal aid, entitled 'What shall we do without legal aid?' Lucy has since taken up a role as President of the Law Society.

HH Judge Goss QC and DJ Loomba

HH Judge Goss QC (Senior Circuit Judge in Newcastle and Hon Recorder of Newcastle) and DJ Loomba visited the Student Law Office on 12 December 2011 and heard from students about their experiences with the live client program. The Student Law Office has always enjoyed excellent relations with the local judiciary and benefitted from their support of the judicial shadowing scheme, where students attend North Shields County Court and are allowed to sit with local judges hearing small claims. Judge Goss spoke to some of the Student Law Office students dealing with civil and employment cases.

Sky visit

Sky News Tyne and Wear visited the Student Law Office in February to do a short interview about the Student Law Office and the new Legal Advice Byker scheme in conjunction with Ben Hoare Bell solicitors. During the visit, students of the Student Law Office acted out a mock client interview. Sky News Tyne and Wear published an article about the Legal Advice Byker scheme as well as a video of the mock client interview which can be viewed on the Sky News Tyne and Wear website.

Helen Marr Visit

The visit was from Helen Marr who is the Graduate Recruitment and Training Programme Supervisor at Dickinson Dees. She visited the Student Law Office on 14 March 2011 to see how the students worked in practice. Helen had a tour of the Student Law Office and attended one of our firm meetings during which we discussed employability and interview techniques. Helen then met with students to discuss a particular case that they have just had in the Court of Appeal.

Helen Marr with Jennifer Stephens and Environmental and Planning firm



Professor Singh

Professor Singh, the Vice-Chancellor of the National Law University, Delhi, visited the University on 26 March. Professor Singh's visit included a tour of the Student Law Office and Law Library as well as observing a Moot session in the Court room with a group of students.

(Left to right) Christopher Ballantyne, Jonathan Sturgeon, Professor Singh, Jonny Hall, Chloe Horrocks and Lauren McNally



Peter Joy – Visiting Professor

The School of Law was delighted to host a second visit by Professor Peter Joy from 8-15 March. Professor Joy is a visiting Clinical Professor of Law at the Law School and is Vice Dean and Henry Hitchcock Professor of Law at WashU Law School, St Louis. Well known for his work in clinical legal education, legal ethics, and trial practice, he has written extensively and presented nationally and internationally on clinical legal education, legal ethics, lawyer and judicial professionalism, and access to criminal justice issues.

Professor Joy took part in a varied programme of activities and was a key participant in a wide range of scholarly events including a professorial lecture entitled ‘Hired Gun?’ The principle and limits of zealous advocacy as a measure of the ethical lawyer. This lecture explored the rationale and challenges of a lawyer’s professional duties to clients with particular focus on the notion of the lawyer as a zealous advocate of the client’s best interests. Other sessions included a cross-University session on experiential learning and teaching methodology to students at the coalface: collaboration between disciplines in clinical and experiential learning. This round table discussion considered the growth, benefits and challenges of experiential method in Higher Education and opportunities for cross-disciplinary clinics and other experiential activity. We were joined at the session by Julie Price from Cardiff University who was able to provide a Welsh perspective on these issues, particularly the Welsh Rugby Union project she has commenced which provides pro bono legal advice to rugby clubs and unions across Wales.

Magistrates visit

On 27 February, students working in the criminal firms in the Student Law Office were given an invaluable opportunity to hone their advocacy skills in a mock advocacy session which involved local Magistrates and a local Magistrates legal clerk. Students were provided with a range of scenarios and invited to present their submissions in the Law School’s mock courtroom from either the prosecution or defence perspective, with their supervisors playing the part of the client and court usher. The applications included pleas in mitigation, applications for legal aid and bail as well as hearings to determine whether the case should be heard in the Magistrate’s or Crown Court. To ensure that the experience was as true to life as possible, students only had a short amount of time in which to prepare the applications. The exercise was designed to provide students with a taste of what life as a busy duty solicitor would be like.

Both the Magistrates and the Legal Clerk were impressed with the quality of the advocacy demonstrated during the

session and the students found it an invaluable if somewhat nerve-racking experience! In order to maximise the learning experience, the sessions were recorded so that the students could later reflect upon their performance in smaller groups.

Commenting on the session, Judith Gowland, Senior Lecturer and Supervisor in the Student Law Office said: “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.” Joanne Clough, Senior Lecturer and also a supervisor in the Student Law Office said: “We are confident that our students have the ability to provide quality advice and representation, particularly in the less serious cases where legal aid does not often allow for a qualified solicitor and the client would otherwise be facing the court unassisted.”

European and local clinical visitors

On 30 April – 2 May 2012, the Student Law Office hosted a visit by a group of academics from Masaryk University Law School of the Czech Republic, Bilgi University of Istanbul and Teeside University. The visit was an opportunity to discuss skills orientated methods of legal education and pro bono schemes in operation between Law Schools and society. The visitors also spent time looking around our Law School, observing how the Student Law Office operates and discussing the students’ learning experiences.

Michael Stockdale, Carol Boothby with academic visitors





Legal Walk

This year's Legal Walk took a route along the north side of the river, crossing at the Millennium Bridge to end with a drinks reception at Jurys Inn, Gateshead. On the walk were members of the judiciary, court and tribunal staff, local solicitors and barristers as well as staff from Northumbria University. Student volunteers acted as marshals. The money raised goes to the North East Legal Support Trust, a charity providing funds for voluntary legal advice.

Case study

Mr F was an entrepreneur who had created his own online retail website concept. He came to the Student Law Office for advice on setting up a company, commercial contracts and intellectual property. We advised him on corporate governance, directors' duties, shareholder issues, Companies House forms and fees. We checked his brand name for any potential intellectual property issues and advised on trade mark registration. We advised the client on the key terms required in a web design contract including risks and options.

Staff research news

Visit to Zagreb

Jonny Hall and Carol Boothby travelled to Zagreb in Croatia to deliver presentations and workshops at an event entitled 'Promoting effective clinical legal education' on 27-28 February 2012. This followed a successful visit to the Law School by the Zagreb clinic students and academics led by Professor Alan Uzelac, Director of the Zagreb Faculty Legal Clinic. The aim of the visit was to promote clinical legal education as beneficial to law students, law faculties, the legal profession and the wider community and to develop the skills of academic staff and students involved in the student legal clinic in Zagreb. Carol and Jonny were joined by Dinah Crystal, Director of Clinical Legal Education at Manchester University, and the visit was sponsored by the British Embassy.

The President of the Law Society, John Wotton

The President of the Law Society, John Wotton, visited the Student Law Office on 11 June 2012. He met with Carol Boothby, Paul McKeown and Jonny Hall and discussed the clinical program and its potential in providing access to justice in light of the reduction in availability for legal aid.

Legal Advice Clinic at Newcastle Deaf Centre

The School of Law worked in partnership with David Gray Solicitors, Irwin Mitchell and deaf-led charity Becoming Visible to provide a legal advice clinic to the deaf community on 21 May 2012. The deaf community often has difficulty in accessing legal advice and is therefore disadvantaged in accessing justice. The project was organised as part of the LawWorks North East Pro Bono Hub and is the only clinic of its type outside of London. The feedback from clients and solicitors was very positive and further clinics are planned later this year.



Jonny Hall took part in a conference held in Dubrovnik on the clinic panel stream looking at 'Clinical Legal Education and Legal Aid: Effective protection of rights as a by product of legal education?'

Jonny used Skype to give his presentation and take part in discussion.

Conference in Padua

In March 2012 Victoria Murray was invited to speak at a conference on clinical legal education in Padua, Italy. Clinical legal education is still in its infancy in Italy so the aim of the conference was to encourage academics and students to take an interest in clinical legal education with a view to developing clinics, and to introduce local practitioners to the concept. Viki's paper was titled 'The Rewards and Challenges of Clinic: a UK Perspective'. Other invited speakers were Cristina Amato (University of Brescia), Joost Pulwelyn (Geneva Graduate Institute), Enrica Rigo (Roma Tre University) and David Rossman (Boston University Law School). Approximately 100 delegates attended and the conference was well received.

European Clinical Network meeting

In June 2012 Victoria Murray attended a meeting to discuss the establishment of a European clinical network. Held in Turin, the meeting was attended by clinicians from Italy, Spain, Belarus, Czech Republic and Poland. It was agreed that there is a need for a European network and working groups were created to finalise the association's constitution, website and plans for future events. It is anticipated that the Law School will be heavily involved because of our expertise and established clinical activities. Further discussions are planned for October.

Publication on Tenancy deposits

Paul McKeown's article, 'Tenancy Deposits: Restoring Parliamentary Intention,' was published in Landlord and Tenant Review. This looked at the interpretation of the tenancy deposit legislation and the effects of the Localism Act 2011.

Student Law Office students Samantha Roberts and Tom Wilson



Clinical Network meeting in Turin

The SLO and National Pro Bono Week – Law in the Library

"Very helpful and thorough advice and an excellent service. Thank you!"

"Very good advice provided in a comfortable setting. I was put at ease."

"Good constructive advice provided. I was able to ask questions and all of my queries were answered."

"It was a relief that I could get all the information I needed. The advice and explanations were all given in a clear and understandable manner. Thank you!"

National Pro Bono Week

Leading national law firm Eversheds and Ben Hoare Bell, one of the largest legal aid firms in the North East, have teamed up with the School of Law to work with law students to provide free legal advice during National Pro Bono Week.

Eversheds' solicitors worked alongside solicitors and law students from Northumbria University to provide an all day advice session at Newcastle City Library on Monday 7 November 2011. Members of the public could drop in for free legal advice at the heart of Newcastle city centre.

"The Law in the Library event was a great success and complemented not only Newcastle Libraries Business and Intellectual Property Centre, but also the free Citizens Advice Notes, which advise on all aspects of law and which are available to library members through Newcastle Libraries' 24 hour library" *Anne Archer, Newcastle City Libraries Service*

Law students also worked with volunteers from Ben Hoare Bell solicitors in the Byker offices in the east end of Newcastle to provide free advice there. Ten lawyers gave up their time to take part in the sessions and by the end of the week more than 50 members of the public had received free 30 minute interviews resulting in either free initial advice, referral to another appropriate advice agency or were having their case taken on by Ben Hoare Bell or the Student Law Office.

In January 2012, Legal Advice Byker was jointly launched and seeks to provide weekly free advice sessions in the east of Newcastle (see later piece).

Jeff Dean, Managing Partner at Ben Hoare Bell, said: "We are delighted to be working with Northumbria Law students who are the lawyers of tomorrow. Our work together in pro bono week will help us develop our new Legal Advice Byker project to offer free advice in partnership with Northumbria University in the New Year."

Kevin Kerrigan, Executive Dean of Northumbria Law School, said: "Community engagement and practical lawyering are at the heart of what we do as a Law School. This complements the significant and increasing commitment of the North East legal profession to public service in the region."

(Left to right) Kevin Kerrigan (Executive Dean of Law), Lucy Winskell (Pro Vice-Chancellor), Hugh Welch (Senior Partner of Muckle LLP), Edward Garnier (Solicitor General) and Roger Wiltshire (Chief Counsel of BAE Systems and Trustee of Law Works)

Launch of Law Hub

The School of Law, in partnership with national pro bono charity LawWorks, formally launched the LawWorks North East Pro Bono Hub last year. We were delighted that Solicitor General Edward Garnier was able to formally launch the Hub during his lecture on pro bono on 1 December 2011. The Hub will build a regional network of law firms to facilitate and celebrate the provision of free advice and representation to members of the public and community groups in the North East.

The legal profession has a long history of providing valuable pro bono as part of its responsibility to society. Pro bono work can take various forms including free legal advice sessions and assisting charities and community associations as well as the provision of free representation at courts and tribunals.

Northumbria University School of Law, with support from LawWorks, will liaise with the local legal profession to facilitate the provision of pro bono services in the North East and will develop local pro bono projects to target local needs.

The LawWorks Hub will run as a pilot until January 2013 and will be open to the whole of the North East community including individuals, charities and community groups who may require assistance from members of the Hub including many North East law firms.

Kevin Kerrigan, Executive Dean of the Law School, said: "We are delighted to be involved in this exciting partnership with LawWorks and are honoured that the Solicitor General will launch the North East Pro Bono Hub with his lecture.

"The Hub will celebrate and encourage the excellent community investment work done by the legal profession in the North East. We look forward to working with Muckle LLP and many other law firms to help improve access to justice in the region."

The Solicitor General's lecture was followed by a panel discussion incorporating Roger Wiltshire, chief counsel of BAE Systems and trustee of LawWorks, Hugh Welch, senior partner of Muckle LLP and Paul McKeown of Northumbria University School of Law, who will discuss how they engage in pro bono work.



Student Law Office Judicial Shadowing Program

This has been a very successful program running from 2005 at North Shields County Court and kindly hosted by District Judge Large, and since his retirement, by District Judge Jackson and his colleagues. Students get the opportunity to shadow a judge dealing with cases which come before them in the local county court. Around 30 students took part this year.

"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."

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

Law Society Annual Dinner

Law School staff and students mingled with members of the local profession at this annual social event.

Streetlaw

The Student Law Office runs a Streetlaw Project each year with students drawn from the LPC, BPTC and GDL courses. Streetlaw began in America over 20 years ago and is a community legal education programme. As part of the project students deliver presentations and workshops on legal topics to schools and different community groups with the aim of informing them about their legal rights and responsibilities.

In the academic year 2011/2012 the Streetlaw project grew from strength to strength with over 40 students delivering 11 presentations to groups including the Newcastle Tenants Federation and Refugees Voices as well as some local schools. Topics included:

- Anti-social behaviour
- Street/knife crime
- Animal welfare

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

Shelter

Our joint project with Shelter has now completed its fourth year, enabling students in the Student Law Office, and others, for example on our GDL program, to research and advise clients in writing on more complex housing queries, whilst gaining invaluable experience in the area of housing law.

We dealt with 48 housing enquiries during this year through this scheme.

(Left to right) Kevin Kerrigan, Carol Boothby, Kristina Jackson, Daniel Oliver, Paul McKeown, Samantha Dyson, Ricky Handa, Jenny Atkin and Samantha Roberts



Newcastle – the promised land (Young Lawyer Magazine Autumn 2011)

The following is an extract from an article written by Elaine Campbell, Solicitor Tutor, and was published in a recent edition of the Young Lawyer Magazine:

“Recently named as the country’s top destination for university students, Newcastle is a vibrant and dynamic place to live and an excellent place to train and embark upon a career in law.

“I have worked in Newcastle all of my legal life. I trained at Dickinson Dees LLP and on qualification joined Sintons LLP where I specialised in commercial and intellectual property law.

“My desire to pass on that knowledge and support the lawyers of the future has now led me to become a Solicitor Tutor, working in Northumbria University’s Student Law Office. The Student Law Office is a pro bono scheme where final year law students advise real-life clients with real-life problems, all under the supervision of qualified solicitors and barristers.

“It provides law students with the chance to gain a greater understanding of how the legal system works in practice and is internationally renowned. Northumbria Law School has always been at the forefront of innovative legal training. It is the only Law School in the UK to offer the MLaw (Solicitor) programme, a full qualification law degree where graduates are eligible to become newly qualified solicitors. The Law School also enjoys an outstanding employability rate – second only to Oxford.”

Legal Advice Byker

2012 saw the Student Law Office team up with Ben Hoare Bell Solicitors LLP in order to deliver Legal Advice Byker – a series of free evening advice sessions. Members of the public were offered the opportunity to have an hour long interview with students studying on the Legal Practice Course at Northumbria University. The sessions were supervised by qualified solicitors from both the University and Ben Hoare Bell LLP and the clients were given free legal advice.

The project, coordinated by Chris Simmonds, ran as a pilot during National Pro Bono Week, then for a 10 week period from February 2012 during which time 30 clients received free advice.

Web in Feb

On 6 February 2012, four Student Law Office students delivered an interactive workshop at Newcastle City Library designed to assist new and emerging businesses keen to learn more about the legal issues associated with trading online.

Mark Balmforth took the delegates through terms and conditions. Gavin Jones explained how domain name ownership can be overlooked. Ciara Murphy examined the complex world of data protection. Finally, Luanne Morton presented an introduction to trade marks and copyright.

After the presentations had ended, the students answered questions from the audience and then spoke individually with those who wanted further advice. They were supported by their supervisor in the Student Law Office, Solicitor Tutor Elaine Campbell.

Conversations in Social Enterprise

On 23 February 2012, the School of Law hosted “Doing it for our Community! Conversations in Social Enterprise.” This was the first event specifically for and about social enterprises to be held in the North East.

The event attracted over 100 delegates including owners and members of local and national social enterprises, those interested in setting up similar businesses, and local entrepreneurs. Elaine Campbell, Solicitor Tutor, worked with Angie McLean of Fast Forward Now Ltd to organise the event which included presentations from:

- Nationally acclaimed and multi-award winning Tyne Gateway which was established by North and South Tyneside Councils to support family and child poverty;
- Cross cultural community music project Crossings which brings together asylum seekers, refugees and musicians to promote integration through music;
- Jam Jar Cinema CIC, winner of the Social Entrepreneurship category of the 2011 Blueprint business awards.

The audience heard heart-warming and often heart-breaking stories from those who had directly benefited from these social enterprises. They were also treated to some fantastic music from the Crossings women’s choir who made their first public appearance!

The event ended with presentations from students working in the Business and Commercial firms Student Law Office who offered an insight into the interesting cases they have been working on this year. All of the students working in the Business and Commercial firms attended the event and were on hand to answer legal questions during the networking time after the formal presentations ended.

Comments from guests:

"A can-do attitude! Useful to hear about the Student Law Office and also what else is happening in the region. Excellent food and drink at the end. Good opportunity to ask for advice and network."

"Very inspiring case studies and it was useful to hear how people have got to where they are now!"

"Enjoyed hearing about other projects and their stories. I was also interested in the legal side as it was explained clearly."

External speakers for joint firm meetings – these speakers presented on their areas of expertise to groups of 12-24 students in the Student Law Office

'Advocacy in the Employment Tribunal' Jamie Anderson (Trinity Chambers)

'Hints and Tips at a Small Claims Court' DJ Large

Workshop called "The importance of branding" Gill Gilthorpe (Square One Law)

Our thanks to speakers who gave their time to speak to our students and also to our academic colleagues who support the Student Law Office with their expertise.

We were also delighted to welcome a number of guest speakers for our lecture programme. Our guest lecturers included Pro Vice-Chancellor Lucy Winskell, who shared the highlights of her 25 year legal career and answered questions about the future of the legal profession, and In-House Lawyer of the Year Peter Judge who provided our students with an entertaining and thought provoking lecture on career opportunities. Many thanks to all of those who took the time to come and speak to our students.

Out of sight, out of mind

During the 2011/12 academic year, Gemma Craven was a final year law student and a member of one of the Student Law Office's Business and Commercial firms. Gemma dealt with three complex intellectual property cases during her time in the Student Law Office and was keen to increase the general public's understanding of IP. Gemma drafted an article which the Intellectual Property Office accepted for publication in their e-bulletin, extracts of which are below:

Out of Sight, Out of Mind: Your Intellectual Property Rights

Intellectual property is often a hidden asset, with many companies struggling to identify, manage and protect any rights they might have. According to the 2010 Intellectual Property Awareness Survey of Business, only 15% of small companies have ever sought advice on safeguarding their ideas with intellectual property protection.

Working as a student advisor in the Student Law Office at Northumbria University, I am currently faced with providing intellectual property advice to commercial clients. Being in this position, I have come to realise the ignorance of businesses in relation to the law surrounding intellectual property. Without realising it, companies are unknowingly throwing away valuable intellectual property rights and potentially leaving important monopoly rights unused.

Legal Sector Alliance

Students in the Environmental firm in the Student Law Office have registered the School of Law as a member of the Legal Sector Alliance (LSA). The LSA is an inclusive movement of law firms and organisations committed to working collaboratively to take action on climate change by reducing their carbon footprint and adopting environmentally sustainable practices. Northumbria University is the first university to join the LSA and engage with the legal sector to make a commitment to reducing our carbon footprint and minimise our impact on climate change. Students in the Student Law Office have already started devising innovative student support schemes in which we will work with the Law Society to promote carbon reduction in the legal sector.

"The Legal Sector Alliance and the Law Society are delighted that the School of Law at Northumbria Law School has joined the LSA and has committed to take action on climate change. Our innovative partnership with Northumbria University will enable us to work together to assist other organisations in reducing their carbon footprint and identify and implement environmentally sustainable practices." Michael Johnstone, Manager of the Legal Sector Alliance.

Breakfast Event

On 28 June 2012 the Student Law Office took part in the inter-schools Breakfast Event. 'Northumbria Law School on Trial', with Solicitor Tutor Chris Simmonds and LPC student Linsey Holden-Downes advised an up and coming amateur footballer (played by Executive Dean, Kevin Kerrigan) on his legal rights following some homophobic 'tweets'. This aimed to illustrate the work of the Legal Advice Byker project, supported by Ben Hoare Bell solicitors. Jeff Dean from BHB talked about the project, with Carol Boothby (Director, Student Law Office) explaining the workings of the Student Law Office to staff from the University.

Clinic Book

'The Student Guide to Clinical Legal Education and Pro Bono' received another positive review in the Autumn edition of the Young Lawyer. The reviewer comments that 'this book is a great starting point for anyone undertaking any legal work experience as it is crammed with those little pieces of information that make working lot easier'. Published by Palgrave, edited by Victoria Murray and Kevin Kerrigan, and with contributors from the Student Law Office clinic team, this will hopefully be a useful guide for students.

Clinic Club

This is aimed at providing a forum for clinic staff to discuss clinical research and look at topical academic papers. Staff met this year to discuss their research interests, and looked at 'Teaching and Doing: the role of law school clinics in enhancing access to justice' by Stephen Wizner and Jane Aiken.

International partners

CUNY Law School

We have a memorandum of understanding with City University New York, and our visiting Professor, Beryl Blaustone, hosts our student exchange funded in part by a scholarship from Irwin Mitchell.

Professor Blaustone is also a regular attendee of and speaker at the IJCLE conferences.

From left Kevin Kerrigan, Linsey Holden-Downes and Chris Simmonds.



Washington University St Louis

Professor Peter Joy is Director of the Criminal Justice Clinic at Washington University St Louis, and is one of our visiting professors.

Yale Law School

Our visiting professor Jay Pottenger is a leading clinical professor at Yale.

Palacky University School of Law, Olomouc, Czech Republic

We have established an Erasmus program with Palacky and have a memorandum of understanding.

Conferences

International Journal of Clinical legal Education Conference July 2012

We were delighted to host the IJCLE conference at Durham this year. Those attending travelled from as far afield as Australia, Eastern Europe, United States and Nigeria. there was a record number of delegates, with over 122 registered.

(Left to right) Jeff Giddings, Jonny Hall, Mary-Ann Noone, Catherine Klein, Paula Galowitz, Jay Pottenger and Kevin Kerrigan.



Last year's conference was held in 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?' Northumbria Law School also publishes the International Journal of Clinical Legal Education.

SLO Student Feedback

Students were asked what the best thing about the Student Law Office was:

"Working closely with clients and other organisations to provide efficient advice and support."

"Having a sense of community, knowing that you are making a difference to real people, the experience and of course, the laughs."

"I have enjoyed being given responsibility to run a real file and gain experience in interviewing and legal drafting – putting black letter law into practice, particularly with business clients."

“Developing the skills which are transferable to my future career in law. I feel far more confident that I can go into a training contract with a greater knowledge of letter writing, researching and overall communication. It has been a very valuable learning experience and I have taken a lot from it.”

“Our supervisor allowed the whole firm to really grow into the style of solicitor we wanted to be and she supported us really well; making us think about the work we did. Very inspiring.”

“I have really enjoyed the SLO this year. It is definitely the most interesting and exciting thing that I have ever done and it is an experience that I will carry with me for the rest of my life. The casual office environment is great and working alongside my friends has been enjoyable. I have met new people and have got on really well with my firm throughout the year. I have found the workload to be quite intense but I have not minded it at all. Coming in every day to do case work is something that I have greatly preferred to lectures and seminars.”

MLaw Year Three Standardised Client Experience

Natalie McLean has joined the MLaw (Solicitors) route program, and started part of her placement in the Student Law Office. She reflects on her experiences in the preparatory clinic program in Year 3, and in particular, the newly introduced use of trained ‘clients’, known as standardised clients, to enable students to develop their interviewing skills before entering live client work:

“Completing the standardised client interviews in Year 3 gave me an invaluable experience of the practical work of a solicitor.”

At the beginning of the initial interview, I found myself extremely nervous having never interviewed a client before, however by the end of the interview I was feeling much more at ease with my client and more confident in my own abilities. This highlighted the importance of effective interviewing techniques. By conducting thorough research into the case, I found I was able to explain my client’s options to her in a clear and understandable manner. Overall, I found the experience challenging but highly rewarding.”

Student Achievements

In March, Student Law Office students working in employment firms took part in a Student Law Office advocacy competition. The competition has been running for a number of years but this was the first time employment firms competed against each other. The competition is kindly sponsored by Gordon Brown Law Firm, and partner Jonathon Stokes once again acted as the judge. The winning firm was Caroline Foster’s employment group, represented by Melissa Walker and Sophie Cohen. All participating students received a certificate and the winners were presented with prizes, which had been generously donated by the sponsor.

Student Prizes

David Gray prize for the student scoring the highest overall mark for the Student Law Office was awarded to Nikita Bos.

Philip Plowden scholarship for the student in the crime firms who scores the highest overall mark was also awarded to Nikita Bos.

Law School Alumnus supports new Clinical Legal Education Scholarships

Northumbria Law School has recently agreed a number of new scholarships that will enable students to travel, gain legal experience and contribute to social justice projects around the world.

Mr Wee Teng Woon, a graduate of Northumbria Law School and long-time supporter of our law students, has agreed to fund three new £1,000 scholarships to help fund student travel and expenses to participate in placements in law clinics or with law firms undertaking public interest work around the world. These new awards for Clinical Legal Education enable the Law School to expand further the opportunities available to its clinical legal education students. The winners of the first Woon Clinical Legal Education Scholarships are Lydia Burnside Hughes, Kirsty Adamson and Victoria Jones who are all undertaking internships with law firms in Singapore.

Mr Woon (now retired) had built up highly successful legal and business interests since his graduation in the early 1980s. Despite being based in Singapore, he has maintained strong links with the North East of England and has generously supported deserving students via the existing Woon Scholarship scheme and the Woon Foundation Painting and Sculpture Art Prize which was launched at Northumbria University in autumn 2012.

Case studies

We represented Ms Y in a CICA Appeal. Ms Y was claiming compensation for the psychological injury she suffered after being informed that a family member had been the victim of a violent crime.

Her original application was refused on the basis that she was not in the immediate aftermath of the incident. Relying on the extensive case law in this area, we successfully argued her position and she was awarded £15,400.



Irwin Mitchell Scholarship

We thank Irwin Mitchell for their continuing support of this educational scholarship, which enables one third year student to spend time in another law school. For the third year, this will be at City University New York. Competition for this scholarship is fierce.

Last year, Alan Ball travelled to New York, and provided this lively account of his experiences.

The City that Never Sleeps

When I touched down at Manchester Airport I stepped off the plane and thought to myself 'did I really just spend a month in New York City?' The answer is yes and it was one of the greatest experiences I have ever had!

After taking my first yellow cab (which is not for the faint hearted due to how fast they drive) all I could see was bright lights and giant buildings everywhere I looked.

I was here for a purpose; to experience law in a different jurisdiction at CUNY law school. The law school was based in an old American high school which was a world away from

Northumbria's high tech building. However, this gave it its own unique character and charm which, combined with the people who taught and studied there, made it a friendly place to be.

I worked in the Community Economic Development and Mediation clinics, researching and preparing client cases, performing mock negotiations and mediations and interviewing clients. For this I travelled to Brooklyn to conduct the interviews and began work transforming the clients company into a different legal organization. Added to this I witnessed a late night Mediation in Small Claims Court, which was a surreal experience watching cases being conducted so late at night!

I also ensured I fully experienced the nightlife and sightseeing the city had to offer. Whilst staying at the YMCA I made a fantastic group of friends who helped me with this. This included trips to the Rockefeller Centre which provided unparalleled views of New York and Central Park, a ferry to the Statue of Liberty, seeing Mamma Mia on Broadway, and a trip to the Bronx Zoo to see the gorillas. Added to this we took a weekend trip to Boston which included a visit of Harvard which was truly memorable. Singing karaoke in the local Irish bars whilst everyone watched baseball (not football) is one of my favourite memories. When I wasn't working I practically lived in Times Square, soaking up the electric atmosphere and also ate in a revolving restaurant which was great to watch the world go by.

New York certainly is the city that never sleeps with something always going on. Whenever I turned a corner I came across something different, from a Brazilian carnival to a break-dancing competition in Central Park. The experience of studying law in a totally different jurisdiction has broadened my legal knowledge and skills; but the month in itself has given me friends and memories that I will never forget.

A final word from our Director...

We can never capture in a report all the work and effort that goes on in the Student Law Office during the year, but I would like to thank our admin team and in particular Dawn Nellist for unending support, our trainees Helen Williamson and Fiona Cartwright, and our Bursary Lauren Brown who has just left us to take up a post at Ben Hoare Bell. Thanks also to our students for their hard work and enthusiasm. Finally, special thanks to the team of academic supervisors who work incredibly hard to ensure that the Student Law Clinic provides both an excellent service for clients and an amazing experience for our students.

Carol Boothby