

NORFOLK COMMUNITY LAW SERVICE

"Providing Access to Justice & Equality"

Press Release

Free Legal Advice Charity celebrates return of UEA Law Student Volunteer as qualified Solicitor.

Norfolk Community Law Service (NCLS) is celebrating the success of its volunteering scheme as former volunteer and UEA Law student Naomi Newell returns as a qualified solicitor to give legal advice for free.

Judi Lincoln, NCLS Advice & Volunteer Manager, said *'We are delighted that Naomi's volunteering experience with NCLS has contributed to her successful qualification as a solicitor and are very pleased to welcome her back to advise the increasing numbers of clients seeking help.*

Naomi, a qualified Dispute Resolution Solicitor with Norwich firm Cozens Hardy Solicitors, volunteered with NCLS throughout her 4 years as a student at UEA.

Naomi said *'It is more important now than ever before that the legal profession does its bit for charities that provide much-needed free legal advice to the local community. I was fortunate enough to be involved with the volunteer scheme at NCLS when I was an undergraduate Law student at the UEA and I am thrilled to work for Cozens-Hardy LLP, which also supports NCLS. It was a very proud moment for me to sign my NCLS application form to enter onto the rota as a qualified solicitor after having started my degree in 2010 and I very much look forward to contributing, along with the other solicitors, to helping our local community.*

NCLS hopes that Naomi's application will be the first of a number of student volunteers who will return as successfully qualified solicitors.

I to r: Judi Lincoln, Naomi Newell & Professor Gareth Thomas, Director UEA Law Clinic



Background

NCLS started delivering services in 1980 and was formally established in 1985, subsequently becoming a limited company and registered charity in 1998. Our purpose is to identify unmet legal need in Norfolk and to work with partner agencies to develop free services to meet that need. We aim to provide access to justice and equality and particularly target our services at disadvantaged & vulnerable groups e.g. offenders, migrant workers, other BME groups, people with physical disabilities and mental health issues, people with learning difficulties.

Our **current services** include -

- twice weekly free legal advice drop in service in our Norwich office - employment, family & general and weekly services at Cromer & Great Yarmouth
- debt and money advice for vulnerable clients e.g. offenders
- specialist welfare benefits appeals advice and representation at Tribunal
- advice for victims of domestic abuse
- advice on residency status & entitlement for EEA Nationals
- discrimination advice and representation
- rent arrears mediation for City Council housing tenants
- family court support service for clients who have no representation

We have 16 members of staff (10.7 FTEs) & around 130 volunteers, of whom 65 are solicitors and 45 are law students, mainly from UEA. We hold the Advice Services Alliance Advice Quality Standard for Debt & Welfare Benefits and our Immigration Adviser is regulated by the Office of the Immigration Services Adviser (OISC).

We have seen a substantial increase in demand for our services over the last few years as a result of the combined effect of the recession, legal aid cuts and Welfare Reform. The complexity of issues clients are presenting with has also increased.

Our initial figures for the 2016/17 financial year show that we helped a total of 2,348 clients with 2,964 cases i.e. some of the clients received support from more than one service.

NCLS is the lead agency for the **Norfolk Community Advice Network** (NCAN), a network of voluntary agencies e.g. CABx, Shelter, Age UK & statutory authorities as well as private solicitors which works to promote access to social welfare legal advice in Norfolk. NCAN has developed an on line directory of services and an electronic client referral system which ensures that clients are referred as seamlessly as possible to the most appropriate source of advice from whichever agency they originally present to.

Norfolk Community Law Service, St Clements House, 2-16 Colegate, Norwich, NR3 1BQ

Tel: 01603 496623

Fax: 01603 618320

E-mail: info@ncls.co.uk

Web: www.ncls.co.uk

For further information contact:

Judi Lincoln, Advice & Volunteer Manager or Ros Brown, CEO, NCLS, tel: 01603

499263

