

GLOUCESTER LAW CENTRE

# ANNUAL REPORT 2010- 2011



Beatrice Webb House  
3rd Floor  
75-81 Eastgate Street  
GLOUCESTER  
Gloucestershire  
GL1 1PN

T: 01452 423492

F: 01452 387594

E: [admin@gloucesterlawcentre.co.uk](mailto:admin@gloucesterlawcentre.co.uk)

W: [www.gloucesterlawcentre.co.uk](http://www.gloucesterlawcentre.co.uk)

## DROP-IN SESSIONS:

### Benefits

Monday and Thursday 10.00 - 12.00

Tuesday 13.30 - 15.00

*Appointments also available*

### Housing

Wednesday 10.00 - 12.00

*Appointments also available*

### Immigration

Monday 10.00 - 12.00

### Employment

*By appointment only*

Company limited by Guarantee.  
Registered in England no. 1937081.  
Registered Charity no. 900439.  
VAT registration no. 682 6209 22.  
Member of the Law Centres Federation.

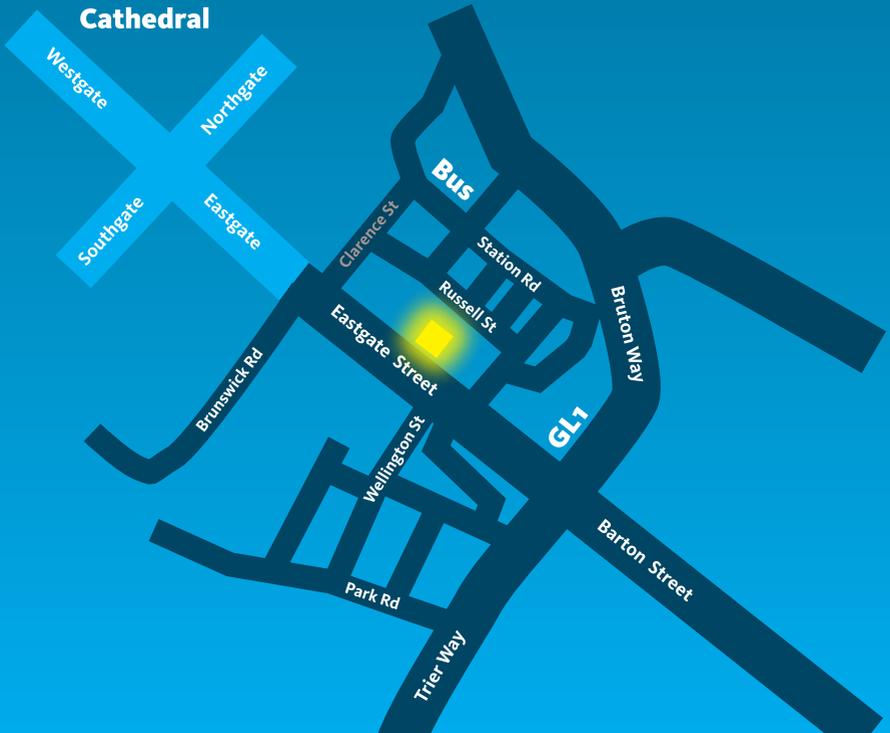
Please telephone first with your enquiry

# 423492

## CONTENTS

Summary	1
Welcome from the Chair of the Board of Trustees	2
Statistics 2008/9	3
Summary of Accounts	4
Casework - Employment	5
Casework - Housing	7
Casework - Immigration	8
Casework - Benefits	11
Staff	BC

## Cathedral



**GLOUCESTER LAW CENTRE** is a registered charity which has been providing free, confidential impartial legal advice to Gloucester residents for 26 years. We currently cover the areas of Housing, Welfare Benefits and Council Tax, Employment, Immigration, Nationality and Asylum.

In general, our advice is limited to those who live within the city boundaries but sometimes we can help residents of Gloucestershire. Our immigration and nationality service extends to the rest of the county for clients eligible for legal aid. We provide a countywide service to all residents for employment discrimination cases, regardless of income.

We offer basic, first level advice, as well as specialist advice and representation in courts and tribunals. Advice is offered at drop in sessions and by appointment. A number of our clients come to us by referral from other organisations.

Interpreting in Gujarati, Urdu, Hindi is offered by appointment. We can also arrange for interpreters in other languages if needed, and signing for those with hearing impairment.

Central to our work is maintaining and developing our community involvement with our users and potential users. Many organisations continue to use the Law Centre for specialist consultative support and we have continued to provide talks to groups about service areas and training sessions.

## LIST OF NATIONALITIES HELPED

Afghani, Albanian, Algerian, American, Angolan, Argentinean, Armenian, Australian, Austrian, Bangladeshi, Barbados, Belarusian, Belgian, Benin, Botswanan, Brazilian, British, Brunei, Bulgarian, Burmese, Burundian, Cameroon, Canadian, Chilean, Chinese, Columbian, Congolese, Croatian, Cuban, Turkish Cypriot, Greek Cypriot, Czech, Danish, Dominican Republic, Dutch, Ecuadorian, Egyptian, English, Eritrean, Estonian, Ethiopian, Fijian, Filipino, French, Gambian, German, Ghanaian, Greek, Guinean, Guyanese, Hong Kong Chinese, Hungarian, Indian, Iranian, Iraqi, Irish, Israeli, Italian, Ivory Coast, Jamaican, Japanese, Jersey, Jordanian, Kenyan, Korean, Kosovan, Kurdish, Latvian, Lebanese, Liberian, Libyan, Lithuanian, Macau, Macedonian, Madagascan, Malawian, Malaysian, Malian, Maltese, Maori, Mauritian, Mexican, Moldovian, Mongolian, Moroccan, Namibian, Nepalese, New Zealander, Nigerian, Pakistani, Palestinian, Panamanian, Paraguayan, Polish, Portuguese, Romanian, Roma, Russian, Rwandan, Salvadorian, Saudi Arabian, Scottish, Senegalese, Serbian/ Montenegrin, Seychelles, Sierra Leonean, Singaporean, Slovakian, Somali, South African, South Korean, Spanish, Sri Lankan, Stateless, Sudanese, Swedish, Swiss, Syrian, Taiwanese, Tanzanian, Thai, Togolese, Tongan, Trinidad/Tobagan, Tunisian, Turkish, Turks + Caicos Islands, Ugandan, Ukrainian, Venezuelan, Vietnamese, Welsh, Windward Islander, Yugoslavian, Zaire, Zambian, Zimbabwean

(A total of 137)





## CHAIR'S REPORT 2010-2011

**I am delighted once again to invite you to consider the annual report for Gloucester Law Centre.**

We are proud to be an outstanding and unique organisation in Gloucestershire providing free, independent legal advice for 27 years, as a registered charity.

We provide legal representation through all levels of courts and tribunals to those in need. Our employed barristers, solicitors and skilled, experienced advisors continue to provide an excellent service to all our clients in the areas of welfare benefits, immigration and nationality, housing for tenants and employment for employees. Our client feedback forms show very high satisfaction levels with our work both on a personal and professional level.

This has been another challenging year for the Law Centre as the Legal Aid Bill makes its way through the Parliamentary process. This Bill is a huge threat to the future of the Law Centre, and threatens the Legal life line that we provide, as if it goes through without amendments, the Law Centre will not exist in its present form and may not survive at all.

The current economic climate has significantly increased the numbers

of people seeking legal advice and has put huge pressures on the service.

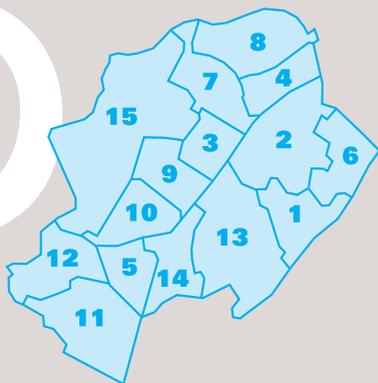
I would like to take this opportunity to give a special mention to all our volunteers. We have a very brilliant set of volunteers, some that have been with us quite a short time and a number that have been with us for many years, and we simply would not be able to function without them. This year we have had 21 volunteers helping us. Our volunteers help to staff reception, do admin tasks, deal with our pensions, pay invoices and various other areas of work, as necessary and we really value their help and dedication. Some who have left us have moved on to full time employment.

A thank you must also go to the paid staff who through their diligence, patience, dedication and skills have produced the results that you can read in the pages of this report.

I would like to sincerely thank our funders, our clients, my fellow trustees, and the dedicated staff and volunteers, who work as a team that I am proud to lead and has enabled us to ensure that Gloucester Law Centre continues to provide the best service possible to all the people we serve.

# CLIENT STATISTICS

# 3



## CASES WORKED ON 1/4/2010-31/3/2011

Housing	528
Asylum	189
Immigration	525
Welfare Benefits	872
Employment	529
Council Tax Debt	40
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>2683</b>

*N.B. Some clients will have more than one case.*

**This is 213 more cases than last year – an 8% increase**



**NO. OF CLIENTS IN 2010-11 2676**

## GENDER

Male	1298
Female	1378

## WARDS

1 Abbey	79
2 Barnwood	122
3 Barton & Tredworth	674
4 Elmbridge	28
5 Grange	38
6 Hucclecote	54
7 Kingsholm & Wotton	165
8 Longlevens	56
9 Matson & Robinswood	218
10 Moreland	240
11 Podsmead	52
12 Quedgeley Fieldcourt	87
13 Quedgeley Severn Vale	38
14 Tuffley	75
15 Westgate	265
Homeless	10

Cheltenham 98

*(number of asylum cases dispersed to Cheltenham)*

Cotswold 21

Forest of Dean 59

Stroud 69

Tewkesbury 69

Wotton-under-Edge 6

*(Prison visits for immigration/asylum cases)*

Bristol 14

*(When the Immigration Advisory Service in Bristol closed, the Legal Service Commission asked us to take some of their asylum cases)*

Not known 139

*(one-off telephone enquiries)*

**TOTAL 2676**

**Money we brought in for our clients in the last financial year (April 2010–March 2011)**

**£1,307,224.68**

## SUMMARY OF ACCOUNTS

	<i>Unrestricted Fund</i> 2011 (£)	<i>Restricted Fund</i> 2011 (£)	<i>Total</i> 2011 (£)	2010 (£)
<b>Income and Expenditure</b>				
<b>Incoming Resources</b>				
Incoming resources from generated funds				
<i>Voluntary income</i>				
Miscellaneous income and fund-raising	6,485	–	6,485	14,277
Investment Income	100	–	100	236
<b>Incoming resources from charitable activities</b>				
LegalAid and legal fees	282,443	–	282,443	228,948
Grants and Contracts	256,355	–	256,355	227,166
<b>Total Incoming Resources</b>	<b>545,383</b>	<b>–</b>	<b>545,383</b>	<b>470,627</b>
<b>Resources Expended</b>				
Charitable activities	499,063	–	499,063	464,488
Governance Costs	5,775	–	5,775	5,812
<b>Total Resources Expended</b>	<b>504,838</b>	<b>–</b>	<b>504,838</b>	<b>470,300</b>
<b>Net Incoming Resources</b>				
	40,545	–	40,545	327
<b>Total funds at 1st April 2010</b>	<b>165,037</b>	<b>–</b>	<b>165,037</b>	<b>164,710</b>
<b>Total funds at 31st March 2011</b>	<b>205,582</b>	<b>–</b>	<b>205,582</b>	<b>165,037</b>

## BALANCE SHEET as at 31st March 2011

### Tangible assets

2011 (£)

–

2010 (£)

### Current assets

Debtors and prepayments  
Cash at bank

64,055

152,646

**216,701**

37,838

141,644

**179,482**

### Current liabilities

Creditors: amounts falling  
due within 12 months

-11,119

-14,445

### Net current assets

205,582

165,037

### Net assets

205,582

165,037

### Unrestricted Funds

General funds  
Designated funds

80,582

125,000

73,037

92,000

**205,582**

Restricted Funds

–

### Total Funds

**205,582**

**165,037**



## EMPLOYMENT

The Employment Team have had their busiest year yet, with a 13% increase in the numbers of cases we have dealt with. In total we have provided advice in 529 cases. We expect demand for our services to continue to increase as the recession bites and more people find themselves on the receiving end of unfair treatment at work, or lose their jobs.

The Employment Teams funding comes from two main sources: the Legal Services Commission and The Equality and Human Rights Commission. The Legal Services Commission scheme funds employment cases for clients who qualify for free help, and eligibility is means-tested. Under this funding we can help clients with the full range of potential employment law problems, such as breach of contract, unpaid wages, unfair dismissal, and discrimination, under this scheme.

The Equality and Human Rights Commission scheme is for employment discrimination cases, and under this funding we can help clients who have a discrimination claim of any sort.

In the twelve month period covered by this report, we achieved a total of £231,307.57 in compensation for clients with discrimination claims and £69,605.94 in compensation for clients with other types of claim such as for unfair dismissal.

*Some examples of the cases we have dealt with:*

Ms J was known by her employer to be vulnerable due to having suffered sexual abuse in the past. He exploited this vulnerability by seeking to befriend her, and then sexually abusing her himself over a significant period of time, until she eventually found the

courage to seek help. We negotiated an out-of-court settlement of £30,000 for her, without the need to file a claim in the Employment Tribunal.

Mr P was called into a meeting with his employer and harangued until he agreed to sign the resignation letter his employer had typed out ready for him to sign. We filed an unfair dismissal claim on his behalf claiming that he had, in reality, been dismissed, and that his employer had been trying to save himself the cost of paying redundancy pay. Mr P was fortunate in finding another job very quickly. He won his case in Tribunal, and was awarded compensation equivalent to the redundancy payment he should have received.

Miss B was the only woman in her workplace doing a manager's job in a male-dominated work environment, and was also by far the youngest manager. She was paid far less than other managers doing the same job, and was also subject to sexist abuse from colleagues. We filed claims on her behalf for age and sex discrimination and equal pay, which were settled out of court for £20,000.

In addition to achieving compensation for clients, there are also cases in which we gain other outcomes, such as negotiating an agreed reference for a client, or assisting a client to retain their employment where their job has been put at risk. An example is the case of Mrs L, a cleaner, who speaks little English. She had agreed with her supervisor that she could take a month's leave to go abroad and visit a sick relative. Unfortunately, the supervisor failed to inform the manager, who dismissed Mrs L, thinking she had gone AWOL. We wrote to the employer

explaining that she had a strong claim for unfair dismissal but that she would prefer re-instatement. The company accepted the point and agreed to re-instate her in her job with full back-pay for the intervening period.

Employment law is dynamic and constantly changing and this year the team has had a major new piece of discrimination legislation to get to grips with. The Equality Act 2010 came into force in stages, beginning on 1st October, and replaces almost all the previous anti-discrimination law which has built up over the last 40 years. The new act harmonises definitions of unlawful discrimination across all or most of the 'protected grounds' (age, disability, gender reassignment, marriage and civil partnership, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion or belief, sex and sexual orientation) and where necessary strengthens the existing law to support progress on equality. The act also extends the scope of some provisions that previously applied only to certain strands of discrimination law and introduces some entirely new concepts, such as the prohibition on pre-employment health enquiries and the limitations on the enforceability of pay secrecy clauses.

The Housing Law unit has been busier than ever this year, advising 528 clients which is an increase of 25% on last year. This has put exceptional pressure on the small housing team, and we expect the workload to continue to grow as changes in housing policy put increasing pressure on tenants in both the public and private sectors.

We deal with a wide range of issues for tenants in both sectors, including possession and eviction claims, homelessness and rehousing, disrepair, harassment and unlawful eviction, housing benefit, succession and deposit disputes. We are also seeing an increase in clients facing mortgage repossession claims, particularly where they have a mortgage with a mortgage company which is not one of the big high street firms. Many of these organisations offered deals which seemed very attractive at first sight, but contained clauses in the small print which allowed huge charges to be added if any payments were missed. Clients have been left in an ever-increasing spiral of debt with thousands of pounds of additional interest being added to their accounts.

We are very concerned about the effects of a number of changes in housing policy which are due to be implemented over the next few years. Firstly, there are changes to housing benefit which will mean that the amount of housing benefit payable reduces and tenants in privately rented property will struggle to afford their rent. At the moment a single person under 25 is only able to claim the "shared accommodation" rate of benefit to meet the cost of a room in a shared house, rather than the rate for self-contained accommodation. From January 2012 the "shared accommodation" rate will apply to single people up to the age of 35 and in most cases in this

area their housing benefit will be reduced by around £30 per week. This will mean that many single people up to the age of 35 who currently live for example in a one-bedroomed privately rented flat will be unable to meet their rent payments and will be forced to move out.

Other changes are proposed which will mean that Council tenancies are no longer secure as they are now, and new flexible tenancies will be introduced. Under these tenancies the landlord will be able to terminate the tenancy if the tenant's circumstances have changed so that they are no longer deemed to require the accommodation. This could include people who have been tenants for many years and have brought up a family in the home. When the children leave home the parents could be forced to leave and find smaller privately rented accommodation. We have real concerns about the hardship which will be caused to families and communities by these changes

## CASE STUDIES

1. Ms M contacted us because she had just received a notice that she was being evicted from her Council home because she had rent arrears of over £2000. Ms M is unable to work because of chronic physical and mental health problems and when we looked into her case we found that her housing benefit had been suspended for a number of months. Ms M had accidentally missed an appointment for a Department of Work and Pensions medical examination, meaning that her Employment and Support Allowance had been stopped. She had made a new claim, but the DWP decided that no benefit could be put into payment until she had attended a rearranged medical. By the time she came to the Law Centre Ms M had been waiting for almost five months

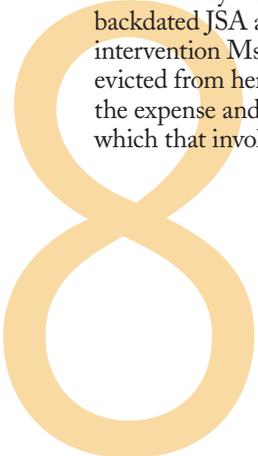
for the appointment to come through, during which time she had been completely without any income and relying on family and friends to feed her. We were able to help her to apply for housing benefit to be reinstated on the basis of nil income, and the whole of the arrears were cleared just in time to prevent her eviction.

2. Mr B came to the Law Centre desperately worried about his wife and young family having received an eviction warrant from his mortgage company. Mr B was in receipt of Pension Guarantee Credit and therefore entitled to help with his mortgage interest from the Department for Work and Pensions, but the amount they were paying was nowhere near the monthly interest charged on his mortgage. We investigated and discovered that the DWP had wrongly applied a "cap" on his payments which did not apply to his circumstances, and had therefore underpaid him by over £1000. Mr B could not possibly have understood this as the rules on housing costs payments are extremely technical. We assisted Mr B to obtain the arrears of payments due to him, and also liaised with his local authority who agreed an interest-free loan to help towards the remainder of his arrears. We represented Mr B in court and persuaded the Judge to suspend the eviction warrant. Our intervention not only saved Mr B's home but also at a very modest cost in legal aid saved thousands of pounds of public money which would have been spent if the family had been evicted and had to apply for homeless assistance.

3. Ms D approached the Law Centre for advice and assistance with regard to her benefit claims and housing situation. Ms D, a foreign national, had entered the UK entirely lawfully as a family member of an EU national living and working in the UK. After being in the UK for some time Ms D was subjected to serious domestic violence by her husband and had to flee the family home. She was assisted by a local domestic violence support group who were able to provide accommodation as she was in a very vulnerable and fragile state. However Ms D had no income and we advised her that although she was no longer living with her partner following the violence she retained entitlement to benefit derived through his status as an EU worker and should claim Jobseekers Allowance and Housing Benefit. The law in this area is complex and DWP took many months to reach a decision. At the same time housing benefit was (incorrectly) refused on the basis that Ms D did not have the right to reside. After submitting appeals on both issues and making detailed submissions over a number of months we were able to convince the DWP that our legal arguments were correct and Ms D, who had been fed in the meantime by a local church, was awarded backdated JSA and HB. Without our intervention Ms D would have been evicted from her accommodation, with all the expense and drain on public resources which that involves.

It has been another exceptionally busy year in the Immigration Department of the Law Centre. We are still receiving fewer asylum cases, from applicants at an early state of their case, than before. However, we still have quite a large caseload of clients who wish to make fresh representations, following an earlier refusal of their case, where fresh evidence has come to light, or where they have new family circumstances. In addition, there are still come outstanding cases that we have, for old asylum seekers, whose case was due to be considered within the Home Office Case Resolution procedures. These cases are now generally due to be considered at what is known as the Case Assurance and Audit Unit, in the Liverpool branch of the Home Office, but we have also had some success with cases that have been dealt with by a newly formed “Case Conclusion Team” based in Cardiff.

This work has kept us relatively busy, but it is really in the field of general immigration that represents the majority of our caseload at the present time. This has included cases ranging from providing representation at the Upper Tribunal of the Asylum and Immigration Chamber in Deportation cases, through to simple advice concerning a person’s eligibility to naturalise as a British Citizen. We have also provided advice, assistance and representation in domestic violence cases, EEA matters, marriage and other dependant relative cases, such as children, or elderly parents, Family Reunion for refugees, Work Permits, overseas students and Certificates confirming the Right to Abode.



As ever there have been various changes to the rules and Home Office policies during this period, but perhaps one of the most significant changes was always due to be implemented after May of this year (2011). At that point, nationals of the eight Eastern European countries who joined the European Economic Area in May 2004, namely, Poland, Czech Republic, Slovakia, Slovenia, Lithuania, Latvia, Estonia and Hungary, are no longer subject to the restrictions whereby they were required to regularise any employment (other than self-employment) with the Home Office for the first twelve months of their stay. That process, known as the Workers Registration Scheme, has now ceased to operate, and workers from those countries can take any employment, without the need to inform the Home Office. However, as before, if they require an official residence document, they will still need to apply to the Home Office for this, and we can assist with such applications if required.

There has also been some notable judgements in the Supreme Court, which could have a significant effect for some of our clients. For example, earlier in the year, in the case of *Z H Tanzania*, it was adjudged that where an Immigration application is being made by the parent of a British Citizen child, then the best interests of that child should be of primary consideration when considering the case as a whole. This is quite a significant change of emphasis, as it can usually be submitted with some force, that the best interests of the child would be to remain in this country with their parent. Accordingly, a number of our clients have

been able to raise this case, when dealing with a Human Rights application and appeal. Some of these have already had successful outcomes, and it appears that this judgement would have played a significant part in that outcome.

Another recent judgement in the Supreme Court has been to overturn a Home Office decision to refuse a spouse visa, because one of the parties was under the age of 21, following the recent rule changes in that regard. In this case (*Quila*) it was found that there was no evidence of any kind that this case was a forced marriage, whereas the stated reason for the rule change, whereby the parties in a foreign marriage must be over 21 if one of them is living abroad, and wishes to apply for a visa to enter this country, was to attempt to prevent forced marriages. It was further found that, in that case, the Human Rights aspect to it, under Article 8 of the European Convention, relating to family life, clearly meant that the decision to refuse was disproportionate. It was further stated that there is a clear indication that the overwhelming majority of other cases, with no element of force, would go the same way. Notably, one of the Lords involved in the case found that, "in any view this rule is a sledge-hammer, but she (ie the Secretary of State) has not attempted to identify the size of the nut"

It is therefore likely that this judgement will be of great significance to some of our clients in the future.

As was fairly widely publicised, the large national charity that provided representation in a great number of immigration and asylum cases, known as

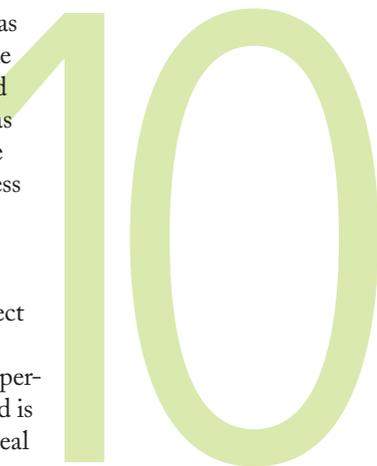
the “Immigration Advisory Service” went into administration earlier this year. As a result of this the Law Centre was asked by the Legal Services Commission to take on a number of their cases, where urgent work was required. We were able to deal with this request, including one case where the client had an appeal hearing scheduled to take place the very next week. It was also the case that the majority of such cases were local residents in any event.

### CASE STUDY

Miss H was a Family Member of an EEA national, and she came to us for assistance because her husband had been violent and abusive towards her. As a result of this, she had been forced to leave him, and was temporarily in a refuge as she was effectively destitute, due to the fact that the Home Office had refused her application for a Residence Card as an EEA Family Member, because the husband had refused to allow her access to his employment details.

The client did not qualify under the Home Office policy and rules in respect of foreign spouses who are victims of domestic violence, because this only operates within the Immigration rules, and is not available for EEA clients. An appeal was therefore lodged under Human Rights grounds, as well as the EEA rules. Evidence was gathered as to the episodes of violence and also in respect of the County Court proceedings concerning the issue of contact with the children, in readiness for the appeal hearing. Fortunately, the County Court pleadings from

the husband referred to his self-employed status, and this was subsequently accepted by the Home Office as evidence that her husband was exercising his Treaty Rights in this country’ Thus they were able to issue a Right of Residence for our client, and the appeal Hearing did not need to go ahead. Furthermore, we were able to advise her that, if her husband left this country, or they got divorced, (both of which she is expecting to happen), then she will still be able to remain in this country with her children, as by that stage she will be able to show that she has a “retained right of residence” within the Immigration (EEA) regulations 2006, due to the length of her marriage, and the fact that it broke down due to domestic violence.



## WELFARE BENEFITS

The Law Centre continues to advise clients on the whole spectrum of welfare benefits. The past year has been particularly busy with the welfare benefits team seeing 872 clients, an increase of 104 cases compared with last year.

We specialise in representing clients at appeal tribunals and appeals to the Upper Tribunal and have a very high success rate. Wherever possible we try to resolve clients' disputes without recourse to tribunals and are often able to persuade the Department for Work and Pensions, the Tax Credit Office and the City Council to revise their decisions where we can show their original decision was flawed.

As well as helping to resolve particular problems which clients present with, we also use our knowledge and experience to diagnose and identify issues that the client was unaware of. This can often lead to us helping people to successfully claim benefits they didn't know they were entitled to and in some cases to challenge decisions, which they had previously assumed were correct.

During the past year we have been inundated with enquiries from clients whose Employment and Support Allowance has been stopped, following a medical examination. The test of incapacity for work has become increasingly stringent over recent years and 62% of people undergoing the "Work Capability Assessment" are being told they are fit for work. This has led to a huge increase in the number of Employment and Support Allowance appeals, which has risen from 68,000 in 2009 to a projected 240,000 by the end of April 2012.

The appeals system appears to be on the verge of collapse. As a consequence of appeals taking so long to be heard we are seeing many clients who are

bounced between being told at assessment that they are fit for work, to being found unfit at appeal then sent straight back for a new assessment where they are found fit for work again. In all of these cases we seek to gather medical evidence to show that the original decision was flawed and in the majority of cases clients are successful at appeal.

In the next couple of years there are going to be radical changes to the social security system, which are of major concern to many of our clients, particularly those who are disabled. In 2013/14 Disability Living Allowance is to be replaced by the Personal Independence Payment (PIP). The new assessment framework for PIP is very similar to that for Employment and Support Allowance and risks replicating the problems produced by the Work Capability Assessment. Together with many national charities we are concerned that PIP won't be directed at those who need the greatest support because the test for eligibility is likely to be flawed.

### CASE STUDIES

1. Mr and Mrs R. first sought advice from us about a Tax Credit overpayment in November 2008. HM Revenue and Customs were demanding that Mr. and Mrs. R. repaid over £20,000 of Tax Credits that had been paid to them over a four year period. We contacted the Tax Credit Office who advised that due to a computer system error Mr and Mrs R.'s claim could only be paid manually and that because the system didn't recognise any entitlement to Tax Credits, any payments, which had been made to them would be classed as an overpayment. Despite many re-assurances that the problem would be rectified Mr. and Mrs. R. continued to receive demands as various departments of HMRC failed to

communicate with one another.

Getting nowhere we advised Mr. and Mrs. R. that they should appeal against the Tax Credit decisions for each of the years in question. Eventually after many more months of wrangling the Tax Credit Office decided in September 2011 that there was in fact no overpayment of Tax Credits and that in fact Mr. and Mrs. R. had been underpaid by £2,500. The fact that it took them almost three years to reach this conclusion shows how long some of the cases we deal with take to resolve.

2. Our client Mr P. was a Czech national who had lived and worked in the north of England since 2008. In 2010 he moved to Gloucester with his family and continued to work until he was made redundant. He claimed Job Seekers Allowance, but was refused as it was decided that he had no Right to Reside in the UK.

This decision was clearly incorrect, as he had been in registered work for at least 12 months up until the time of his redundancy. This was not accepted by the Job Centre.

Initially his work had to be registered with the Home Office, which it was. It transpired after further investigation and appeal, that because his work was through an agency, the names of the employers changed and did not appear to be the same employer. In fact it was the same company and the registered employment was continuous for the appropriate period. This led to the award of 9 months backdated benefit being awarded both for Job Seekers Allowance and Housing & Council Tax Benefit.

## EMPLOYMENT COMMENTS

*'The service and advice was excellent'*

*'I was phoned back within an hour of my first phone call.'*

*'I've been to you many times, it's good to have your service running!'*

*'We need your service open as much as possible, thanks for your time'*

*'You helped me a great deal, you had an excellent knowledge in employment law'*

*'I think you are excellent and I was very lucky you helped me'*

*'The advice I received was relevant and useful, I couldn't have found out the information myself as I don't have a legal background'*

*'Very helpful and very reliable'*

*'It is ideal for people who cannot afford to pay expensive solicitors'*

*'Easy to make contact'*

*'The treatment I had was excellent. I was informed and advised to the end, I felt that I was treated fairly. I was very pleased with the service'*

*'Good legal advice from Lawyers supporting the people who need it'*

## IMMIGRATION COMMENTS

*'Initial contact was very easy'*

*'Very happy with the service and very pleased with the results of my case'*

*'The staff at the Law Centre were very helpful'*

*'Keep up the good work and I am very thankful for the help received from the Law Centre'*

*'You were very helpful and understanding and at hand to help at all times'*

*'The Law centre has been so helpful by sorting our case very quickly with a*

# Questionnaire 2010/2011

*positive result'*

*All that we have got to say is that you guys are doing a great job there and we pray and only hope that the centre will not close down due to all these cuts, you are a lot of peoples last hope'*

*'The Law Centre staff have been magnificently helpful and supportive with their advice and assistance'*

*'The service is very professional and welcoming, and it always stays confidential at all times'*

*'It was very easy to get in contact'*

*'The service at Gloucester Law Centre is of the highest standard, I cannot see for the life of me when the government want to make cuts, it's not right!'*

*'I was very impressed with all the help and support through this matter'*

## BENEFITS COMMENTS

*'For many years I have used the Law Centre and it is always easy to make contact'*

*'I cannot make any suggestion as the service received is excellent. Many many thanks for the assistance given'*

*'Very knowledgeable, sound advice, honest'*

*'Law Centre staff were very friendly and knowledgeable. My representative*

*was excellent and friendly'*

*'I was kept up to date with all information and they made me feel very relaxed'*

*'You were very easy to get in touch with'*

*'Good advice given, friendly caseworker, good location'*

*'I found the Law Centre very helpful and they gave out good information'*

*'I was able to make contact straight away'*

*'I found you very helpful'*

*'Felt very comfortable and at ease'*

## HOUSING COMMENTS

*'Easy to make contact via telephone'*

*'Level of service was very impressive'*

*'I would definitely recommend your services because I feel you handled my case fast and efficiently, very professional'*

*'Very approachable, very good listeners and we were kept updated'*

*'I think what you are doing is brilliant, Gloucester is very lucky to have this service and level of expertise'*

*'Sorted the problem straight away, helpful, excellent'*

*'Thank you so much for all you have done for me, you are the best!'*



Community  
Legal Service



## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

We would like to thank our funders

**Gloucester City Council**  
**The Legal Services Commission**  
**Gloucestershire County Council**  
**The Equalities & Human Rights Commission**

Working with the Citizens Advice Bureau and the Gloucestershire Legal Advice Network (GLAN), we were awarded a Performance Reward Grant

**We would also like to thank:**

Our grateful thanks to Dave Thorp of the Workshop for laying out and producing this annual report. Thank you also to our clients who have made donations to the Law Centre during the past twelve months, and once again we have relied heavily on the goodwill and support from members of our Board of Trustees and our volunteers. Our services could not function properly without them, and we are extremely grateful for all their help, hard work and commitment.

**CURRENT STAFF**

**BENEFITS**

Adrian Yelland  
Anne Whitworth  
Tricia Cowan  
Barbani Moran

**HOUSING**

Anne Whitworth  
Charlie King  
Adrian Yelland  
Yasmine Brien

**EMPLOYMENT**

Janet Smith  
Gillian Manning  
Alex Raeburn  
Nikki Derrick  
*(on maternity leave)*

**IMMIGRATION**

Andy Puddicombe  
Derick Sharkey  
Parvinder Bhogal

**ADMINISTRATION**

Mary Smith  
Alex Young

**BOARD OF TRUSTEES**

Christopher Hill  
*(Chair)*

Sue Ratcliffe  
*(Vice Chair)*

David Schermer  
*(Company Secretary)*

Nimo Jirde  
*(Treasurer)*

Dona Woolf-Sekinger

James Dale

Kay Mills

Saba Yousif

Stella Jensen *(not pictured)*

**COUNCIL OBSERVERS**

Councillor Nick Durrant

Councillor Fred Wood

*(not pictured)*

