

BALLYMUN COMMUNITY LAW CENTRE

Annual Review 2012 / 2013



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Chairperson's Report

I am pleased to present the 2012/2013 Annual Report and Accounts for Ballymun Community Law Centre (BCLC). 2012 saw a milestone in BCLC's history with the celebration of our 10th anniversary, and 2013 saw our move to Shangan into our wonderful new premises.

In reflecting back over the two years, it has been an eventful time for the Community Law Centre, with many changes taking place in the organisation, along with an array of interesting activities and stimulating developments taking place across all of our core Legal, Education and Mediation services.

During the last two years, our **Legal Services Programme** continued to represent clients in a variety of civil law cases and to provide legal information and advice to local people and organisations. There was a noticeable trend of increased queries in elderly and capacity related issues. We ran a mental health law course and a number of seminars in 2013 to give additional clarity on these important issues. Housing queries were consistently high with previous years and our new Family Law and Advice clinic has been getting busier all the time, with clients presenting with a myriad of family law queries, and having a demonstrably high satisfaction rating from the service.

A diverse range of seminars and courses was delivered by BCLC over the last two years, and the staff and directors are, as always, dependant on the many legal and educational professionals who so generously gave freely of their time and expertise to assist us with the **Legal Education Programme**, including the Law Club.

Our **Mediation Programme** has continued to be developed with the introduction of our family mediation service. This volunteer led service is temporarily replacing the statutory Family Mediation Service which we hope to soon host again from our new premises. Our peer mediation service continued in the primary and secondary schools in Ballymun. We also delivered peer mediation training to a number of youth organisations in the community whose target audience are young people who fall outside of the school system.

Throughout our decade of operating a legal service in Ballymun, BCLC has been fortunate to receive the assistance and support of many organisations and individuals who help us to provide the holistic and integrated model of a Community Law Centre that has consistently been our vision. As chairperson I speak for my fellow directors and the staff of the centre in expressing our gratitude to all of our volunteers who give of their time and expertise so freely and we look forward to the continuation of our relationships with them.

We have been fortunate to receive most of our funding during the past ten years from Ballymun Regeneration Ltd, along with the provision of premises rent free from Dublin City Council. 2014 will see some changes in our funding landscape, with the winddown of Ballymun Regeneration and the handing over of responsibility for the Social Regeneration Programme for Ballymun to Dublin City Council. Our move to our lovely new rented premises in Dublin City Council's Neighbourhood Centre in Shangan is a demonstration of their continued support for us and their recognition of the Law Centre as a significant contributor to civic engagement during the Regeneration period. We look forward to continued good relations with the City Council.

I would like to sincerely acknowledge the very important financial support of the Law Society of Ireland which has enabled us to prepare for the future sustainability of our Community Law Centre.

I would also like to extend my gratitude to the members of the Law Society of Ireland and the Bar Council of Ireland, and to our team of volunteer mediators. To my fellow dedicated directors and the staff of BCLC staff I would also like to express my thanks to you for your hard work and ongoing commitment to the community in Ballymun. In particular I want to thank outgoing directors Paula Lally, John Weston and Trish Flynn and to welcome Fiona Gallagher to the board of directors.

I would sincerely like to acknowledge Paula McCann's significant contribution to Ballymun having worked more than eight years as Development Manager with BCLC. Without Paula's dedication and expertise we would not be the quality organisation we are today.

Following his recent retirement from the Legal Aid Board, we are honoured to have retained Frank Murphy as a volunteer here in Ballymun Community Law Centre.

As we are well into our second decade in Ballymun we recommit ourselves to the original vision of BCLC in providing access to justice for all in this community, and to work for an inclusive society based on the principals of human rights, social justice and equality.

At the same time, we recognise the need to continuously be aware of the needs of our clients, our funders and our community partners, and to make sure we continue to deliver a service that is of an excellent standard and of value to them.

Evelyn Hanlon
Chair
Ballymun Community Law Centre

Our Strategic Aims

Ballymun Community Law Centre's (BCLC) overarching priority is to improve access to justice for people in Ballymun and to work for an inclusive society based on the principles of human rights, social justice and equality.

Our Mission

Ballymun Community Law Centre's (BCLC) is an independent not-for profit community based organisation with a core objective to ensure that access to justice is available to the people of Ballymun. The services BCLC provides include information, advice, assistance, representation, education and mediation.

Our Purpose

- To provide free legal advice, information and representation to the people of Ballymun.
- To deliver an accessible legal education programme.
- To offer mediation as an alternative solution to potential problems.

Our Values

We are committed to work in a professional, responsive, respectful and timely manner for the benefit of the client and the community.

Our Office

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Opening Hours

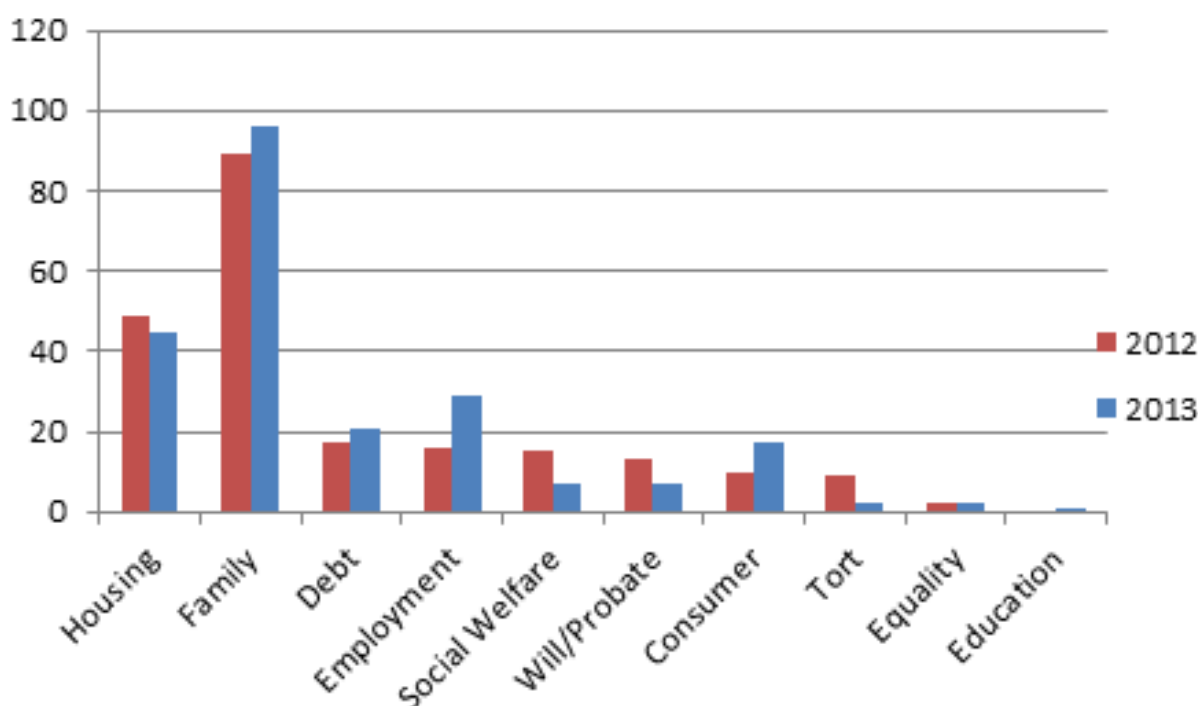
Monday – Friday
9am - 1pm
2pm - 5pm

Legal Services Programme 2012/2013

STRATEGIC GOAL

To provide information, advice, advocacy and representation in areas of civil law.

The main areas of civil law presenting to BCLC in 2012 and 2013 were on housing, family, debt, employment and consumer issues. The chart below gives a quick view of the two years. The statistics include the number of people attending Family Law Advice & Information Service but not the number of different queries dealt with by that service.



The Miscellaneous queries in 2013 consisted in the main of criminal (20%), various contract type queries (20%), Financial matters (10%) and court proceedings (e.g. how to have a child heard in Court proceedings or how to get representation in an Inquest).

Notably there were a small number of Immigration queries and Corporate Governance issues which were raised.

In 2012 63% of the legal queries were dealt with at an Outreach Clinic, in 2013 this figure rose to 66%.

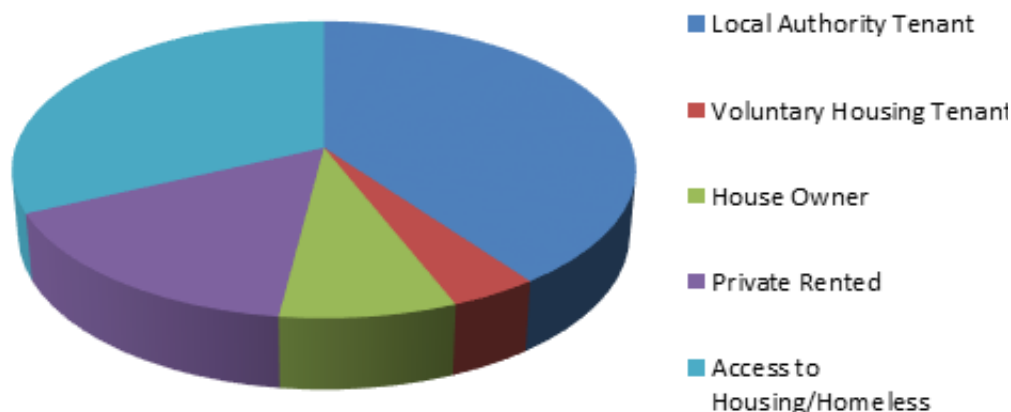
The community has an appetite for outreach clinics and it is noted that in 2012 Citizen's Information commenced providing an outreach clinic in the Civic Offices on alternate Tuesdays; this is in addition to

the clinics FLAC provides on Tuesday and Thursday evenings. The legal need is clearly evident in the community.

It has been observed over the last year or two that Housing queries are becoming more complex and there is a noticeable increase in the queries from owners but also encouragingly queries from tenants with a better understanding of the issues affecting them, using human rights language and having good insight into how to engage and what to expect from a fair process and the legal system.

From April 2013 we began to categorise Housing Queries more specifically and since then to the end of the year the breakdown appears as follows:

Housing Queries



Case Study

In 2013 we represented a client in Employment Equality proceedings. The client had the benefit of solicitor's and counsel's advices at the Equality Tribunal. The client had first approached the Law Centre in first quarter of 2010 having been dismissed from employment. The matter concluded in the first quarter of 2013 with a settlement in favour of the employee.

The client availed firstly of advices from the Law Centre on employment rights, secondly support to clarify the position internally with the employer, thirdly the client was represented in informal negotiations in an attempt to resolve the matter, fourthly the Law Centre lodged a Complaint to the Equality Tribunal of the

client's behalf, the client was supported by solicitor and counsel to participate in Mediation at the Equality Tribunal, following that the Law Centre and Counsel lodged detailed submissions to the Equality Tribunal, considered and advised on the Employer's submission and ultimately negotiated and wrote up a settlement on the client's behalf.

This case study is an example of a typical employment matter. The matter lasted for three years and made its way through all possible phases towards resolution. Ballymun Community Law Centre provides holistic and extensive assistance for clients and is supported by the Law Library members acting pro bono in so doing.

Case Study

2013 saw the successful conclusion to an intervention in relation to a housing matter.

This case resolved with the transfer of our client to alternative housing within a voluntary housing tenancy.

Our client complained that when the tenancy was transferred from the Local Authority to voluntary housing full details of the priority application were not also transferred resulting in an inappropriate allocation.

client for almost a year seeking information and

making representations to the housing association on the client's behalf.

Happily, the matter concluded with alternative accommodation being offered and taken up in an amicable resolution.

Ballymun Community Law Centre assisted the

At the end of 2013 there were 19 open files being dealt with by the solicitors having closed 19 during the year. This does not include the numbers who obtained assistance without the need to open a file. Assistance can take the form of once off advice and sometimes a number of consultations which direct and guide people through what is anticipated to be a short process (or a process they can navigate themselves with specific intervention when necessary) with support for example by way of input into written communications, suggestions on emphasis and strategy and/or tips on what to request.

Files range from assisting with access to housing, engagement with Creditors, Freedom of Information requests, to Equality Tribunal complaints, Social Welfare appeals, Employment Appeals Tribunal to Circuit Court and High Court actions, Appeal to the Supreme Court, Financial Services Ombudsman complaints and engagement with housing bodies etc).

BCLC is very thankful to the members of the Bar Council who continue to provide Pro Bono assistance. To recognise this in 2013 we nominated the Bar Council Voluntary Assistance Scheme (VAS) for a Law Award in the Pro Bono Team category. The VAS was short listed as a finalist.

BCLC was very proud to be a finalist in the Innovation Category for the 2012 Community Law Festival and to be associated with finalists in the categories of Pro Bono Lawyer of the Year (Frank Murphy) and Legal Executive of the Year (Christina Beresford). Christina very deservedly won Legal Executive of the Year 2013.

During 2013 an enormous amount of work was done collaboratively to finalise an international complaint on housing issues. Having identified an international NGO willing to sponsor the complaint the group was very disappointed not to receive the backing of the Irish NGO members. This delayed matters considerably.

At the end of 2013 another suitable international NGO was approached and progress resumed on this project. We also made submissions on law reform to the Law Reform Commission, hosted two part-time interns from the University of Washington and received a Trinity College Law student on work experience as part of Trinity's clinic legal education program. We contributed 1 day of training to CAN's Human Rights Housing Action program and spoke at the DCU student Law Society to celebrate Women in the Law.

Legal Education Programme 2012/2013

STRATEGIC GOAL

To provide a broad legal education programme in Ballymun with the ultimate goal of progression into formal legal education.

A diverse range of seminars and courses were organised and delivered by BCLC during 2012 and 2013.

Course Title	Duration	Date 2012	Date 2013
Family Law Matters FETAC Level 4	12 weeks	3 October 2012	18 November 2013
Employment Law FETAC Level 6	12 weeks	9 October 2012	
Housing Law and Policy	12 weeks	11 January 2012	9 January 2013
Mental Health Law	8 weeks	23 February 2012	
Social Welfare Law	5 weeks	10 April 2012	
Introduction to Irish Constitution			22 January 2013
Human Rights Law			10 April 2013
Introduction to Family Law	14 weeks	14 February 2012	8 October 2013

Seminars in 2012

- **Prison Law** – Liam Herrick, Irish Penal Reform Trust
- **Children's Rights in Irish Law** – Barry Fitzgerald, BL
- **American Family Law System** – Dr. Susan Bennett, Washington College of Law
- **Housing Allocations Law** – Dr. Padraic Kenna
- **Current Developments in the Irish Courts** – Richard McNamara
- **Better Lives for Lone Parents** – Stuart Duffin, One Family
- **Children & Families of People in Prison** – Jane Mulcahy, Irish Penal Reform Trust
- **Complaints against state agencies dealing with children** – Padraic Walsh, Ombudsman for Children
- **After the Referendum: What now for children's rights?** Tanya Ward & Geoffrey Shannon

Seminars in 2013

- **Human rights Law** – Dr. Clodna Murphy, Dublin City University
- **Domestic Violence Law** – Frank Murphy, solicitor BCLC
- **Employment Law** – Frank Murphy solicitor BCLC & Moya DePaor Solicitor Northside Community Law Centre
- **Debt Law** – Paul Joyce, FLAC
- **Personal Insolvency** – Colette Bennett MABS
- **Pensions Law** – Patricia T. Richard-Clark, solicitor, full time commissioner, Irish Law Reform Commission
- **Comparative Social welfare Law** – law students from the United states, Poland and Ireland
- **Cohabitation Law** – Justin Spain, solicitor



The numbers vary from seminar to seminar but there is an average of twenty five people attending each one.

Law Club in Trinity Comprehensive

The Law Club is aimed at transition year students with approximately fifty students involved from the two transition year classes.

Law Classes in Trinity Comprehensive School

The modules of the law club are:

- Introduction to Law
- Criminal Law
- Equality Law
- Constitutional Law



Student visits to Criminal Courts

The students visit the Central Criminal Courts as part of the activities and have the opportunity to sit-in on trials in the courts.

Work Experience

Six students participate in pro-active work experience in a number of solicitors' offices around Dublin. The feedback from the students is very positive as it is usually their first experience of working outside of Ballymun.

Mock Trial

The mock trial is the element of the Law Club where the students staged a mock trial in the school auditorium before the entire school community. Retired High Court Judge Ricky Johnson presided at the mock-trial event in the school in 2012 and in 2013 Retired Supreme Court Judge Murphy presided over The DPP vs. Francesca Hutchinson.

Both years the mock trial was a great success with barristers, solicitors and the gardai assisting the students with the trial preparations. The students researched and wrote their own cases for delivery at the trial. There was meaningful engagement by the students and teachers in the Law Club.

Ballymun Community Law Centre was commended for its work with the students at the Trinity graduation ceremony.



Mediation Services Programme 2012/2013

STRATEGIC GOAL

To provide a high quality mediation service consisting of three core components of community family and peer mediation.

During 2012 and 2013 BCLC received a total of 78 mediation referrals from a broad range of sources including An Garda Síochána, HSE, Dublin City Council, local GPs, Ballymun Credit Union and the Courts. 50 of these cases were brought to agreement.

Outside of Family Mediation which deals with separating couples, the main issues mediated included:

- Neighbourhood disputes
- Inter-family disputes
- Landlord/tenant issues
- Restorative justice case involving young people
- Employer/employee dispute

There were a number of withdrawals along the way from the mediation process. Withdrawing from the mediation process happens for many reasons for example If the mediators deem the case to be unworkable having met with both parties or if there are criminal or other issues involved.

Sometimes parties themselves refuse to engage with the mediation process or parties agree to terminate the mediation process before it progresses to full agreement because both sides have a greater understanding of the other position following the initial engagement with the mediators. In all withdrawals the feedback received by the service has been that the parties have found the difficulties had de-escalated and tensions had been diffused following the intervention by the mediators.

Mediation empowers people to have confidence to tell their story and have their voices heard in a dispute. Mediation enables people to delve into and tease out difficult issues and allows them find their own solutions. Parties are usually pleased to have had the opportunity to tell their stories in a calm, neutral setting.

In other situations the people find solutions early in the process as a result of being able to discuss the issues with a professional mediator.

Debt Mediation

An interesting development during 2012 was financial/debt mediation cases which were referred by the Ccourt Service and resolved by the Mediation Service. BCLC had lengthy and positive discussions with representatives of the local Credit Union and MABs on how mediation can assist people in debt (small scale) without recourse to the courts.

Dublin City Council's engagement with Mediation Services

In 2012 DCC appointed a member of staff who is a trained mediator (a BCLC volunteer mediator) as a mediation agent within the council. She is responsible for assessing whether issues between tenants and the council (non-criminal) are suitable for mediation with BCLC. This is proving to be very effective in solving issues between the DCC and its tenants in the community

Family Mediation

BCLC introduced its own family mediation service in autumn 2012 following the temporary departure of the statutory Family Mediation Service from Ballymun. This decision was taken in order to ensure that Ballymun continued to receive a family mediation service during 2013 The Family Mediation sessions are usually of two hours duration with another hour of co-mediation support for our mediators.

Over the two years 2012/13 a total of 20 couples attended family mediation, each for an average of 5-6 weekly sessions. All of the cases reached agreement and two of the couples are proceeding to divorce. In other cases access and maintenance were the main subjects for negotiation and agreement.

The mediation service has been facilitated by Mediator Niamh Lehane and co-facilitated by volunteer mediators who are being supported by BCLC in building up their family mediation casework.

Learning & Sharing Peer Support Group (LSPSG)

The LSPSG meetings are facilitated support gatherings for mediators to discuss issues that arise during mediation and to share experiences of what occurs during the mediation process and take place on

average eight times annually. The meetings are also is an opportunity for reflective practice and they

provide ongoing professional development and accrue Continuous Professional Development points necessary for the mediators to be registered with the Mediators' Institute of Ireland.

Peer Mediation

Peer Mediation in Ballymun is a training programme designed to help children and young people learn to manage their relationships and deal with conflicts, particularly through mediation skills training appropriate to their ages.

By providing them with skills, values and attitudes that are relevant to their life experiences, it is hoped to lay the foundations for the development of critical life skills. Peer mediation is a holistic, integrated community programme involving the schools, parents, community gardai and educational support teams.

The programme operates in five primary schools in Ballymun where the numbers participating in the programme is approximately 280 children in fifth and sixth classes.

In Trinity comprehensive there are approximately fifty students in transition year doing the training. Another 50 first years entered the school with the skills having participated in the programme at primary level. In 2013 the second year students have had the benefit of the training when in primary school as well.

Virgin Mary Boys sixth class entered the LIFT arts project (organised by Axis) with a video to showcase their conflict management and peer mediation skills. The feedback from teachers in the various schools about the programme is very positive where they see a tangible change in behaviour and increase in learning and language skills.

The Community Gardai are very supportive of peer mediation and tell us how it has enabled them to relate differently to young people they meet in the community in the course of their duties.

They also see it's impact in family situations where the young people have been exposed to peer mediation in school and can use the skills to diffuse difficult situations at home.

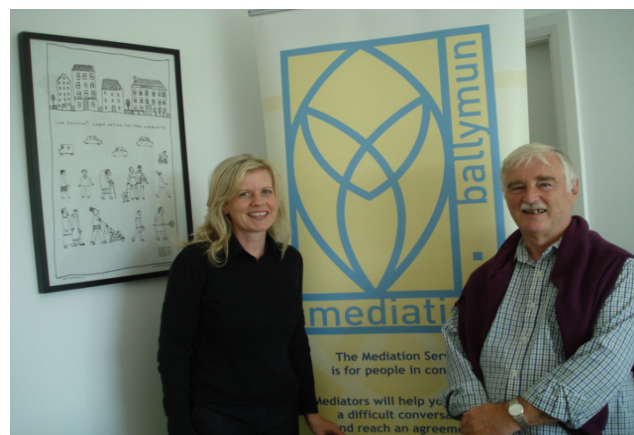
Ballymun is the only place in Ireland where a Peer Mediation programme is being delivered and embedded into the school system at primary and secondary levels.

During the summer of 2012 BCLC also delivered peer mediation training to older teenagers in Ballymun through the youth organisations Youthreach and BALARK.

Restorative Justice Project

BCLC initiated an intergenerational project in 2012 to engage young and older people in dialogue and activities designed to illuminate each other's world. We engaged An Garda Síochána, a number of youth organisations, and the Older Persons' network in this restorative justice project.

In providing the space and facilitating and supporting the conversations, the two generations were able to talk to each other about sharing living space in Ballymun, the impact of anti-social behaviour on older people and the desire to live in harmony with each other. The intergenerational days were facilitated and directed by Geoffrey Corry and Liam Nicholson.



As well as general discussions, debate and exchanges there were also fun activities such as dancing and attendance at a play in Axis where the young people chaperoned the older people to and from the theatre. Ballymun Community Law Centre facilitated all of the activities.

Financial Report

INCOME AND EXPENDITURE ACCOUNT FOR YEAR ENDED 31ST DECEMBER 2012 AND FOR YEAR ENDING 31ST DECEMBER 2013

	2013 €	2012 €
Income		
Grants		
Donations & Fundraising	-	250
Courses & Training Fees	2,054	6,700
Grants	5,672	10,548
Law Society Funding	49,432	53,451
Collective Complaints Income	-	(467)
Ballymun Regeneration Ltd.	140,050	(153,250)
	<u>197,208</u>	<u>340,924</u>
Operating expenses	(203,088)	(234,534)
Operating Deficit	<u>(5,880)</u>	<u>(10,802)</u>

**OPERATING EXPENSES YEAR ENDED
31st DECEMBER 2012 AND FOR YEAR
ENDING 31ST DECEMBER 2013**

	2013 €		2012 €
Legal Education Programme			
Facilitator/Tutor Costs	-		1,720
WRC Accreditation Cost	-		1,646
Community Education			
- Administration Room Hire	193		636
Travel, Meals & Accommodation	<u>1,931</u>		<u>2,545</u>
	2,124		6,547
Staff Costs			
Payroll	143,685		180,542
Recruitment			
- Pension	3,209		4,836
- Consultancy	7,665		-
- Redundancy	<u>15,372</u>		-
	169,931		185,418
Professional Fees			
Mediation Training & Supervision	260		5,905
Legal Fees	<u>443</u>		-
	703		5,905
Overheads & Administration			
Marketing & Advertising	-		1,145
Printing, Postage & Stationery	3,471		3,471
Insurance	4,779		6,173
Light & Heat	2,494		761
Telephone & Communications	3,675		4,240
General Expenses	1,938		4,176
Volunteer Expenses	2,370		-
Audit	1,928		1,956
Professional Fees	2,861		4,253
Repairs & Renewals	1,890		-
Equipment Maintenance & Support	2,329		3,218
Cleaning	1,211		2,570
Bank charges	354		388
Publications & Memberships	1,030		590
Room hire	<u>-</u>		<u>463</u>
	30,330		36,664
Operating expenses	<u>203,088</u>		<u>234,534</u>

Ballymun Community Law Festival

Ireland's first ever Community Law Festival was held in Ballymun in 2012 and was a very exciting development. It included a Pop-Up Law Library; a brain child of Frank Murphy, which merged with our 10th year Anniversary celebration and blossomed into a prototype for the delivery of community law services.

The Community Law Festival Team was a fantastic collaboration of BCLC and friends; Maria Nestor PhD Candidate Trinity College, Barry Fitzgerald B.L., DCU, Axis Theatre, UNICEF, Trinity Comprehensive secondary school, the Law Society and the Bar Council.

The Team was a finalist in the Innovation Category for the 2013 Irish Law Awards and it certainly broke new ground. This was the first Community Law Festival in Ballymun – it may even be a first world wide!

The purpose of the Community Law Festival was to present the law in new ways, new atmospheres and in new community contexts. In this way, encouraging people who may face significant challenges in accessing justice to recognise and embrace law as a potentially positive force in their lives.

The Festival comprised a week of community engagement events with a celebration and theatre performance drawing the week to a close. The Festival took place in Ballymun and was open to everyone. All events were free except the Theatre performance for which tickets were sold on a not for profit basis and any funds generated above cost were allocated to community or charitable organisational ends.

The particular focus of the 2012 Community Law Festival was Children and the Law so all of the events were aimed at getting young people, children and their families to broaden their knowledge and understanding of the law; to see how law can be used to in a constructive way and hopefully to sow the seeds for future career paths in law.

The events during the week long festival included: Daily visits to schools and youth clubs by UNICEF Ireland;



- The opening of a Pop-up Law Library with legal books donated by the Law Society and the Bar Council;
- Daily café conversations on a variety of current issues around children in Ireland;
- Daily Child and Family legal advice clinics;
- A post-referendum seminar with Tanya Ward & Pól ÓMurchú;
- BCLC's 10th anniversary celebration;
- "That Night Follows Day" a theatre production in Axis written and performed by 8-14 year olds.
- Law books display in Ballymun library.

UNICEF kindly delivered programmes into the local primary schools and youth clubs ensuring the Ballymun Community Law Festival recognised the value and importance of young people in society.

This was particularly apt given the referendum on Children's Rights took place the week before. Students from the local secondary school-Ballymun Community Law Centre Law Club put Child Rights experts, Pól

ÓMurchú and Tanya Ward through their paces as part of a very relevant and absorbing discussion on post referendum matters.

Local community organisations also participated in that evening event which struggled to wind up by 10pm such was the interest demonstrated by the community.

In line with the week's theme of community law and the particular local community emphasis on children and families, the Festival Team responded with daily Free Child and Family Law legal advice clinics expertly attended by solicitors and barristers and ably assisted and administered by volunteer law students from Dublin City University.

The Law Society generously donated legal texts from its library and in conjunction with a very accessible space at the Axis theatre the Festival introduced Ireland's first pop-up law library.

The Library "popped up" on Monday afternoon and was opened by first year students from Trinity Comprehensive and thanks to the very accommodating Axis Centre the Library took residence at the heart of the community for the week of the Festival. In tandem the local public library joined in the Festival by providing a comprehensive reference library of law books in its busy Ballymun branch.

The Axis theatre served as a reference point and Festival events revolved around it. Café Conversations were organised in a very informal structure allowing the community to access the setting and facilitating equal participation from all involved and the loquacious community grabbed the opportunity with both hands and took full advantage.

Topics spanned family life, children and families with people in prison and complaints against State Agencies dealing with children and were facilitated by One Family, Irish Penal Reform Trust and the Office of the Ombudsman for Children.

The stark observation; made by Frank Murphy who was the first solicitor to practise in Ballymun, that there were no law books available to the community of Ballymun and lack of lawyers truly connected with Ballymun has been a refrain Ballymun Community Law Centre has echoed over and over again since its establishment so it was a poignant moment to watch young people with aspirations of becoming lawyers

opening the pop-up law library with such eloquence and enthusiasm.

The Festival working week was capped off with the Ballymun Community Law Centre's 10th anniversary celebration. The anniversary was extremely well attended reflecting the support Ballymun Community Law Centre enjoys in the community and further afield.

The partnership of Axis and the Ballymun Community Law Festival Team culminated in the Saturday night grand finale event which witnessed young people from the Wexford Youth Theatre stage a fascinating performance on aspects of life and growing up from their perspective.

Not to let a social gathering pass without using the opportunity to respond to local community needs, the Festival Team seized the chance to advance an inter-generational/restorative justice community project Ballymun Community Law Centre has initiated.

People were matched with individuals from a different generation to attend the play; the purpose was to enjoy each other's company, learn from and engage with each other to forge a better understanding and enhance community life.

The Ballymun Community Law Festival Team (spanning a diverse and broad range of collaborators) delivered legal services, education, legal materials, a library, mediation and provoked legal discussion and understanding to a community and beyond achieving inclusion of families in all their different forms, children, teachers and students, young people, people connected to the prison system, schools, lawyers, academics, older people in a heretofore unheard of fashion, the newly created shape of accessible legal services of the future - the truly stimulating and innovative Community Law Festival.

Visit by Minister for Social Protection

Joan Burton T.D., minister for Social Protection spent an afternoon in BCLC in May 2012.

She was accompanied on her visit by John Lyons, T.D.



Q Standards for Law Firms

In 2012 Ballymun Community Law Centre underwent a thorough examination of all its policies and procedures by the Institute for Legal Research and Standards as part of a risk management assessment process which sets out the essential risk management procedures required by solicitors for professional indemnity insurance. Ballymun Community Law Centre was awarded full compliance in the Q Standards for Law Firms. Ballymun Community Law Centre retained this standard in 2013 and continues to be audited at regular intervals by the Institute.

Housing Law

Housing Group

In 2012 BCLC participated as a member of the housing group which has members from NGOs with an interest in housing issues. The Housing Group made submissions to the Oireachtas on Residential Tenancies Amendment Bill and The Review of Rent Supplement by Departments of Social Protection and Environment. The Housing Group continued to work on rent arrears and is watching for relevant proposed legislation in 2013.

Housing Booklet

A booklet for Social Housing Tenants was launched on March 18th 2012 by Jan O'Sullivan, minister with responsibility for housing and Andrew Montague, Dublin's Lord Mayor. Frank Murphy, BCLC solicitor, spoke at the launch. Copies of the booklet were distributed through CIC's, housing group member organisations, and the law department of DCC.



Danske Banks Irish Law Awards

2012 was the first year of the Irish Law Awards and BCLC was well represented with BCLC's Managing Solicitor Frank Murphy on the shortlist for Lifetime Achievement Award, Christina Beresford short listed for the Legal Executive Award and Siobhan Phelan B.L. also making it to the shortlist for her Pro Bono work for BCLC clients.

In 2013 we had real cause to celebrate at the Irish Law Awards with the awarding of "Legal Executive of the Year" to Christina Beresford, an acknowledgement of her commitment to the provision of legal services to the community of Ballymun.

Christina has been with the law centre for 12 years and has diligently worked her way through third level education with the support of BCLC to achieve her qualification and experience which culminated in the above honour.



Christina Beresford receiving her "Danske Banke Legal Executive of the Year" Award from Miriam O Callaghan

BCLC University Partnerships

2012 and 2013 saw the development of our partnerships with Trinity College Dublin (TCD), Dublin City University (DCU) and University College Dublin (UCD) where we hosted students and provided them with opportunities to build on their competencies and apply their legal knowledge and skills within a professional legal setting.

TCD's Geoffrey Pearson joined our team for a ten week period with great enthusiasm. He undertook clinical work experience and researched areas of legal interest. He also participated in the delivery of the Law Club to the transition year students of Trinity Comprehensive.

We also welcomed Amy Molloy from DCU, who participated in all centre activities. Amy organised our library that had recently been donated to us by Griffith College and left us with a fully catalogued library which has continued to be of great value to us.

In 2013 BCLC welcomed two visiting law students from Washington State University. Kendra Rychlick and Megan Crenshaw organised their time between interning for us and the Free Legal Advice Centre (FLAC).

Both students contributed well and very quickly became a part of the team here. While volunteering with us both Megan and Kendra gained experience in advocacy skills in social welfare and housing law and also worked on the clinical legal education programme.

They researched and delivered a presentation along with our own Aneta Szczurek on a comparative study of social welfare law in the United States, Ireland and Poland to a packed audience.

The students bring fresh eyes, good humour and a new perspective to our work and we look forward to growing stronger links with the Universities and strengthening the clinical legal experience program.

Griffith College Book Donation

BCLC was very grateful to receive a substantial donation of law books from Griffith College Law School. This generous contribution laid the foundations for the first resource of legal reference books available to the community of Ballymun. Great thanks to the Dean of Law at Griffith College Prof. David Langwallener who continues to be of constant support to BCLC.

A student's reflection on BCLC

I recently completed my PhD in Public Interest Law at Trinity College Dublin.

Part of my research involved looking at community law centres in Ireland particularly those serving specific communities as well as finding out if they practiced a type of lawyering called "community economic development" (CED). CED lawyering, in short, is a strategy for redressing urban poverty. Its main aims are to build and empower communities as well to widen law's role in influencing social change.

BCLC, unlike other community law centres in Ireland (which arose out of access to justice calls) was born out of regeneration. This meant that from its outset BCLC has been part of a wider sustainable development policy rather than a purely legal one, making it unique among its kind. [Sustainable development is a fundamental objective of the EU, directed towards the improvement of the quality of life and wellbeing of all by linking economic development, protection of the environment and social justice" (Eurostat, 'Sustainable development in the European Union: 2009 monitoring report of the EU sustainable development strategy - Executive summary' (Office for Official Publications of the European Communities 2009) 2).] Although there is nothing linking access to legal services to sustainable development, BCLC, by providing access to a basic service such as civil legal aid in a regenerated area has created that link. The centre's history and ongoing work has become an example of the interaction between regeneration

and public interest law and how government can collaborate with a non-State controlled law centre in the provision of civil legal aid. Thus, it provides a model of how a community based law centre can work under a collaborative process with government and other institutions.

Through its strategic work, BCLC has facilitated and championed the practice of CED lawyering, providing for the legal and non-legal needs of the individual as well as those of the local community.

This is because CED lawyering presents itself as an excellent tool and lawyering strategy when implementing a strategic model of legal aid, particularly because of its adaptability to local needs

and also because of its focus on the alleviation of poverty.

Moreover, BCLC has acted as facilitator, helping to build and empower its local community by using different legal tools and approaches such as community legal education, mediation and group work which, in turn, have improved the socio-economic infrastructure and development of the local community and its residents.

As such, BCLC forms part of a new type of community law centre aimed at the creation of sustainable communities and as a way of promoting social inclusion.

Regeneration Travels of a Law Centre

Recollected by Frank Murphy
Stormanstown House 2002-2003

In November 2002 Ballymun Community Law Centre opened its doors in the yard behind Ballymun Regeneration Ltd. (BRL) in Stormanstown House, between the Arts Breaking Ground project and the Environment project Global Action Plan (GAP).

It was a good place to start, with lots of support from all the colleagues around us, not to mention the leftover cakes of a Friday smuggled over from the big house and we were in time too for some serious networking at the BRL Christmas party.

Today Stormanstown's fenced unfinished cement blocks stand like the others scattered around the country, bleak, sad, silent monuments to the Celtic Tiger.

In our frenzied early beginnings among the things hard to unravel were the mysteries of GAPs 6/7 eco bins in the kitchen not to mention their wormery outside in the yard. Very green we were waiting at the Ballymun stop on the never to come Metro North line.

Surrounded by regenerating architects, engineers, planners, artists, and environmentalists we were inspired to tear down the conservative old legal structure and build it up again.

Stormanstown was an outpost of the National College of Ireland so right from the start there was great support with our community legal education programme.

Across the Ballymun Road in the library we had the support of the Citizens Information and FLAC had operated its clinic there for many a year.

It was here the steering committee met and teased out from nothing but sheer willpower, that which was to become Ballymun Community Law Centre. It was a privilege to be able to report back to the committee members that their dream had become a reality when the first clients came through the door to avail of our legal services.

From our lair in the back yard we made our early forays into Ballymun and were made to feel most welcome and at home.

So we had to find a home up there in the town centre and DCC found one for us. We gathered up the files for our first big move.

32 Shangan Road 2003-2011

In August 2003 it was up to our own door offices, our very own flat on the block at 32 Shangan Road. For those who went on holidays the removal was simple and their smart move never to be forgotten! For everyone else it was very stressful. It was absolute chaos as the flat was transformed into the brand new Ballymun Community Law Centre.

Everything in boxes. Tilers in the kitchen, plumbers in the bathroom, decorators in the hall, post box installers at the front door. But it was all worthwhile and we had eight very happy years there and best of all our great neighbours who minded us as only they could. We had found our home.

Proceedings heated up the fax and counsels pleadings drafted with midnight oil were engrossed for filing in the central office as our mediators tried to spread their calming words to those who spoke of peace but carried the weapons of war.

In the beginning we had the van shop outside the front door for the milk for all the obligatory cups of tea that kept the legal processes running and entertained all callers, clients and an Attorney General, a Minister, a Justice, and a President.

Historically the Legal Aid Board sent out its first and only outreach clinic to Shangan and the Family Mediation Service too. The Hon Mrs Justice Catherine McGuinness led the Law Reform Commission to Shangan.

It was a great honour to be sitting with former President Mary Robinson, who had brought Josie

Airey's case home in Strasburg, in 32 Shangan Road as she autographed her biography. When I asked her jokingly would she take a brief she said she would love to and you knew truly she would and what's more we'd have been overjoyed to have been briefing her!

Pearse Tower just beside us was demolished. Home to thousands over the years and yet despite being named after the country's most famous barrister, which tenant ever followed in his footsteps to take a brief in the Law Library just down the road?

So it was great to see people coming into the Law Centre to avail of the legal service, mediation and legal education here in their own community and hopefully we would have Ballymun barristers in the bar library soon and solicitors too.

DCU walked up to Shangan from the college to help out with the community legal education and NUIG came over the wire with their groundbreaking video link Housing Law course.

As our work increased and we got new staff we even got another flat upstairs to meet our needs.

We opened our new outreach clinic at Balcurris Park East on the Tuesday before the night of the Bank Guarantee but nobody called us with the 64 billion euro question but we found out later like all around Ballymun would pay the price as budgets were slashed and burned.

With much controversy courage came in 2010 when Misneach was unveiled in Trinity Comprehensive with Young Ballymun leading the charge into the future.

165-166 Balbutcher Lane 2011-2013

January 2011, with the Shangan block detonated, we were one of the last to go, and this time we were off again to another flat across the main road at 165-166 Balbutcher Lane, round the corner from the last remaining Joseph Plunkett Tower from where there was always the cheery wavy and the welcoming hello.

It had been sad to see all our neighbours leave Shangan but we were delighted for them getting their new accommodation and on our own in the end we were glad to move to the renovated blocks with the closed in balconies.

Here we were fortunate to get two flats together so that our whole office had just the one front door.

Again it was good to have friendly neighbours and our westward move brought us into contact with more people with our logo proudly bedecking our balcony window which resulted in an increase in clients coming to the centre and accessing our services.

The Hon Mr. Justice Richard Johnson, former President of the High Court, came to preside over our mock court in Trinity Comprehensive.

Unit 1A Shangan Neighbourhood Centre 2013 to date

July 2013 saw us heading back to Shangan to our new purpose built offices at Unit 1A Shangan Neighbourhood Centre. The vans were packed and loaded and after 11 years we were getting real offices with a door on the street. You can even see our office from the Main Street!

We are back where we began in Ballymun. Our old Shangan office once the hub of legal activity is now no more just an imaginary structure in the sky above the field of dreams where all our memories are resting.

Sometimes passing along the greenway, in my mind I enter the old block and climb the stairs to No. 32 and stand in the office, a lawyer in mid-air, or maybe cyberspace thinking of all the legal work that was done over many years in this office in the sky that is now no more.

Now we are down the road in our beautiful new offices at Unit 1A Shangan Neighbourhood Centre for Tanaiste to be Joan Burton TD honoured the Law Centre with a visit to Balbutcher from where the first

Ballymun Community Law Festival was organized including our pop-up Ballymun Law Library in Axis with the help of the Law Society and Griffith College.

It is good to see the law books out of their usual reserved libraries and available for all the community to dip into and use.

In Balbutcher we celebrated our 10th Birthday and the preparations were done and a decade of wonderful memories compiled in the office and we are grateful to all who helped blow out the candles round the corner in the Reco.

After ten happy years a wandering, and much discussion of permanent homes including once a suggestion that we would be in the new Ballymun Courthouse, a highly unlikely starter at this stage as open local Dublin courthouses are currently being shut up, now with Balbutcher for demolition we needed a new place and find it we did back in Shangan.

the first time we have a real office where clients can enter directly from the street. Many have already and hopefully many more will over the years to come. So what is it like back in Shangan over a decade after our arrival in 2003 Pearse Tower round the corner gone and the Shangan blocks too. Still waiting for Metro North but we have Misneach mounted and the Ballymun community is as strong as ever and the legal work continues.

There are now two private solicitor firms on the Main Street and we are beside DCU in the Community. We are still here, BCLC providing legal services, mediation and community legal education.

Thank you to all who have supported us in all our law centre moves down the years: to our clients, our movers, our supporters and most of all to all the people of Ballymun we hope to continue to be here working with you for as long as you want. We're here now at Unit 1A Shangan Neighbourhood Centre awaiting your call!



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