

BALLYMUN COMMUNITY LAW CENTRE



ANNUAL REVIEW 2011

Ballymun Community Law Centre, 165-166 Balbutcher Lane, Ballymun, Dublin 11

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Chairperson's Report

Ballymun Community Law Centre started the year with a move from Shangan Road to Balbutcher Lane along with a number of other community organisations. Ballymun Community Law Centre had eight fruitful years on Shangan Road. However, the relocation to Balbutcher Lane has been a positive move for the Law Centre with a more visible presence on the street; this has resulted in an increase in the number of clients visiting the centre and accessing our services.

The directors and staff of the centre developed a Strategic Plan 2011-2014 with the assistance of a facilitator from Community Action Network, the process involved an in-depth review of the centre's work and programmes and the outcomes can be briefly summarised as follows:

- It was decided that it was time to look again at the level and type of unmet legal need that exists in the centre's catchment area of Ballymun.
- Another outcome was the decision to expand legal services to include family law advice and information service. The intention is that this service will assist people prior to them becoming clients of either the Legal Aid Board or a private solicitor.

The centre has always been clear about the importance of adding to the legal services available to residents of Ballymun while not duplicating services already provided by either the state or the voluntary community sector; accordingly it was decided to limit the new family law service to advice and information only. The centre commissioned a piece of action research to evaluate the new family law service so as to inform its future direction.

- The board also decided that it would seek to buy in family mediation services and that it would provide further assistance to its existing voluntary mediators by allowing them to be involved in this form of mediation as part of improving their mediation skills.

The centre has continued to provide legal services to Ballymun which continues to be an area of

disadvantage despite the enormous investment by the exchequer and the Council in improving the sustainability of the area physically, socially and economically. There was an increase of nearly 5% in the number of clients using the legal advice and information services. In particular, numbers at the outreach clinics continue to grow.

The centre sought to achieve greater efficiencies and improvement to client services during the year. The case management system was streamlined and the centre received a Substantial Compliance award in the new Risk Management Accreditation for Solicitors in Ireland.

As in other years many legal and educational professionals assisted the centre to deliver a wide and stimulating range of legal education courses and seminars and on behalf of the people of Ballymun, as well as the board and staff of the centre we wish to express our gratitude to those dedicated people who gave of their time so freely and willingly. Many of the courses receive FETAC accreditation through the Ballymun Women's Resource Centre.

The centre continued to provide community mediation services and 2011 was another busy year with the mediators dealing with increasingly complex disputes. The centre was asked to participate on the Steering Committee for the Courts Service Pilot Mediation Service launched in November 2011.

The centre has made Peer Mediation available in primary schools in Ballymun for several years but although many pupils who had moved on to second level were familiar with the concept it was not until 2011 that Peer Mediation was introduced into Trinity Comprehensive School.

The centre is very pleased that this extension of its peer mediation scheme is now available to pupils from primary school to second level. There is clear evidence that peer mediation can help to tackle bullying but it is an important life skill for young people in itself.

The centre would not be able to continue to provide services in Ballymun without the help of its many volunteers. As chairperson I can speak for the board and staff of the centre and indeed for the community in Ballymun in expressing thanks to these volunteers but also and most importantly to our funders.

The offices that the centre operates from are provided by Dublin City Council rent free. Ballymun Regeneration Ltd continues to provide core funding and has continued to be the mainstay of the centre as it has been from the beginning. In 2011 the centre received funding from Pobal and Dublin City Council for specific projects.

The centre will be ten years in existence in 2012 and increasingly funding is coming from other sources. The board and staff are thankful to and wish to acknowledge the Law Society for its continued financial assistance.

In addition the centre is indebted to the members of the Law Society and the Bar Council of Ireland who provide 'pro bono' assistance. The mediation service relies almost exclusively on the work of volunteers and is deeply indebted to its team of exceptional mediators.

The education services and programmes are provided by an equally dedicated and exceptional team of people who have delivered inspiring courses and one off seminars throughout the year.

To the dedicated staff and directors of Ballymun Community Law Centre thank you for your unfaltering commitment. In particular I would like to express my personal gratitude to Frank Murphy who more than anyone else has created an ethos and standard of quality that inspires us all.

In 2012 Ballymun Community Law Centre will celebrate its tenth anniversary: it is an important milestone and a tribute to the tenacity of the directors, staff, volunteers and those who have worked with us over the years that we have managed to survive and deliver on our original vision for a decade in the life of Ballymun.

Over the years we have been privileged to receive visits from many inspiring people who have been instrumental in promoting the cause of legal aid including the former President of Ireland Mary Robinson

It is our intention and wish to continue to ensure the most vulnerable and marginalised people in society are heard in all legal processes.

The need for a community law centre in Ballymun, based in the community and responding to the community is as necessary today as it was ten years ago when Dave Ellis undertook his important research. We look forward not without trepidation to the next decade.

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 (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 OFFICES



Ballymun Community Law Centre moved from Shangan Road to Balbutcher Lane in January 2011.

Ballymun Community Law Centre
165-166 Balbutcher Lane
Ballymun
Dublin 11

Opening Hours:
Monday – Friday
9am - 1pm
2pm - 5pm

Tel: (01) 8625805
Fax: (01) 8625800
Email: info@bclc.ie
Website: www.bclc.ie

LOCAL LEGAL ADVICE CLINICS

The clinics operate on a drop-in basis so no appointment is necessary.

Please note that we can only advise you if you live in the Ballymun area.

Local Employment Office
Ballymun Shopping Centre
First Tuesday of every month
10am - 12noon



Ballymun Library
Ballymun Road
Second Tuesday of every month
10am - 12noon



Poppintree Community Forum/Sports Centre
Balbutcher Lane North
Third Tuesday of every month
10am - 12noon



Drop In Well Family Resource Centre
22 Santry Way
Fourth Tuesday of every month
10am - 12noon

LEGAL SERVICES REPORT

Strategic Goal

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

Ballymun Community Law Centre provides access to qualified solicitors and support staff who can explain your legal rights and obligations, and outline various options and steps you can take to solve your legal problem.

There has been an increase in employment queries as the recession continued to have an impact on people. There was also a noticeable rise in clients seeking resolution to housing issues mainly in relation to standards of accommodation. Possibly this may be due to a lack of local authority resources in the current economic climate or may reflect an awareness of residents of the Law Centre combined with a more pro-active attitude in the community towards the issue. A new trend was the noticeable increase in the queries from owners whereas previously it was almost exclusively tenants who approached the law centre.

This may be an indication of the change in demographic under the regeneration and the making available to residents the option to purchase their homes.

There was a doubling of "Miscellaneous" queries during the year; an ongoing analysis indicated that for 2011 there were a number of queries flowing from criminal matters and also on capacity issues such as those raised due to psychiatric/psychological illness and also dementia related illness.

The local out reach clinics continue to be utilised by the community with increasing numbers attending the drop-in local legal advice clinics presenting with increasingly complex issues which in many instances resulted in further consultations.

The numbers using the drop-in clinics increased also. The outreach clinics provide excellent locations in various areas around Ballymun and allow us to tap into local discussion issues.

Approximately one third of cases dealt with by the solicitors are what might be described as litigious in nature, that is they are being lodged or being prepared to be lodged with some adjudication body eg. Court, Employment Appeals Tribunal, Equality Tribunal, Private Residential Tenancies Board, Financial Services Ombudsman etc. The case work continues to benefit greatly from the pro bono assistance of Bar Council members and for this we are extremely grateful. New barristers are coming forward to assist and support BCLC.

We were very pleased to receive assistance with case work from another professional who volunteered their services to the FLAC register of professionals also. This is a very positive development because often case work suffers from a lack of resources to furnish independent evidence to adjudication bodies.

Strategic Goal

Establish a family law advice & information service on a pilot basis for 6 months. The pilot phase will be accompanied by an action research programme.

The new service started in the autumn with Wednesday morning being the designated time. The clinic is strictly for advice and information only, there is no representation involved. What we have found is that when we deal with potential clients and tell them they need to go to the Legal Aid Board for court proceedings, people are going directly to the LAB for an appointment. The new service has had the impact of directing clients to the appropriate agency at the outset.

Formal information and summary details of the new Family Information and Advice Service were disseminated by way of letters, leaflets, and posters to all local groups, public representatives, churches etc. General information on family law continues to be provided at outreach clinics and at the front of house.

LEGAL EDUCATION PROGRAMME

Strategic Goal

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

During 2011 BCLC delivered a wide variety of courses and seminars across a diverse range of subjects to local residents and people working in Ballymun as well as further afield.

Ballymun Community Law Centre is delighted to work in partnership with Ballymun Women's Resource Centre in gaining accreditation for the FETAC courses.

Courses delivered by BCLC in 2011

- Family Law Matters FETAC Level 4.
Three family law courses were taught along with a course for solicitors working as FLAC interns.
- We were very grateful to Dr. Olivia Smith of DCU who organised a group of law students to assist as study buddies for participants.
- Employment Law Fundamentals FETAC Level 6 in conjunction with Northside Community Law Centre.
- Housing Law and Policy Course from National University of Ireland, Galway.
The fourth year of this highly innovative course was beamed live into the Council chamber from the University campus in Galway. Dr. Padraic Kenna delivered the course as part of the NUIG law degree.
- The Law on Cosmetic Surgery seminar - Jennifer Brown, DCU PhD student
- The Innocent Project in Wisconsin - Barry Fitzgerald, B.L.
- Children and the Law - Pól OMurchú
- Discrimination and Older Women - Dr. Olivia Smith, DCU

- Current Issues in Housing Law - Dr. Padraic Kenna, NUIG
- Protecting Workers' Pay - Dr. Michael Doherty, DCU
- Housing Law vs Housing Policy - Dr. Padraic Kenna, NUIG
- Employment Law Reform - Moya de Paor and Frank Murphy



Presentation of Housing Law and Policy certificates with Lord Mayor Andrew Montague and Dr. Padraic Kenna, NUIG

Law Club in Trinity Comprehensive Secondary School

Ballymun Community Law Centre was delighted to be invited back into Trinity Comprehensive to work with the transition year students.

The two transition year classes had a very stimulating timetable of events during this year's Law Club in the secondary school. Among the activities that took place were a series of lectures on various aspects of the law.

A visit to the Central Criminal Court followed the talk on criminal law which really engaged the students.

Six students participated in work experience in solicitors' offices around Dublin.



The DPP Vs Francesca Huntington Mock Trial

The culmination of the activities was a mock trial – The DPP Vs Francesca Huntington. The students wrote their own scripts and enacted their parts with commitment, great humour and enthusiasm.

The trial was presided over by The Honourable Mr. Justice Richard Johnson, former president of the High Court.

The Law Club provides the students with the opportunity to study and gain an understanding of the law.

We appreciate the support of DCU law school in assisting us with the activities.

Ballymun Community Law Centre is also very grateful to the staff of Trinity Comprehensive and to the local community Gardaí for their assistance and support with the Law Club.



MEDIATION

Strategic Goal

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

The mediation service had a busy year with in excess of forty enquiries. However, not all of those went on to full case hearings. Enquiries from people outside Ballymun were referred elsewhere.

Approximately twenty five cases were dealt with by the mediators with eighteen going to full agreement.

There were seven withdrawals or cases reaching agreement at an earlier stage in the process. One of the most telling feedback statements we receive from people in disputes is they welcome the chance to have their voices heard.

Mediation allows them to tell their story, have the difficult conversation and seek resolutions to issues. Mediation is also about empowerment as the process enables people to tease out difficult issues and helps them to find their own solutions.

Even when participants decided to withdraw from the mediation process the feedback informs us that the difficulties were significantly decreased or de-escalated following the intervention by the mediators.

- A total of 40+ new enquiries/referrals to the mediation service;
- 25 cases referred to the mediators;
- 18 closed with full agreement;
- 15+ enquiries from outside Ballymun referred elsewhere;
- 7 cases withdrawing or not engaging with the mediation process.

Peer Mediation

Peer mediation is a training programme designed to help children and young people learn to manage their relationships and deal with conflict, particularly through mediation skills training appropriate to their age.

By providing them with skills, values and attitudes that are relevant to their life experience, it is hoped to lay foundations for the development of critical life skills.

It is an integrated and holistic community programme in that it involves the children, teachers, parents, educational support teams and the community gardaí.

There are approximately 226 students across the primary and second level schools involved in peer mediation in Ballymun.

A key objective was reached when Trinity Comprehensive secondary school accepted the programme into the school.



Evaluation of the Peer Mediation programme

Key Learning outcomes

- The Ballymun Initiative is the first of its kind in Ireland in that it encompasses the range of primary schools and Trinity Comprehensive secondary school. There is evidence to suggest this initiative has had a significant and positive educational and social impact.

It has helped the children in terms of personal and social development, specifically around managing relationships and conflicts.

- A critical component to the success of the programme so far has been the involvement of so many players from the community and this involvement will be a key to maintaining the peer mediation programme into the future.
- Each school should have responsibility for providing training for the children. It is essential each school has two teachers trained for the task.
- Engage with the secondary school to secure agreement around the implementation of the training with particular emphasis on transition year students so they can provide a peer mediation service in the entire school.

This will build on the skills of the new first year students who were involved in peer mediation in primary school.

- Develop a restorative approach to the management by the schools of behaviour which results in physical or emotional harm to students.

Court Services Mediation Service

The Dublin Circuit and Districts Courts are currently running a pilot initiative in partnership with Ballymun Community Law Centre, Northside Mediation and South Dublin Mediation Service.

The objective is to encourage lay litigants to use the mediation process when seeking certain court remedies.

Volunteer Mediators

Ballymun Community Law Centre wants to acknowledge the huge contribution made by our team of volunteer mediators who provide an extremely professional and confidential mediation service to the people of Ballymun.



Income and Expenditure Account for the year ended 31st December 2011

	2011	2010
	€	€
Grants		
Donations & Fund raising	3,529	4,082
Courses & Training Fees	9,555	11,720
Grants	681	15,556
Legal Fees net	23,501	48,897
Law Society Funding	46,752	52,121
Collective Complaints Income	500	-
NCI Accreditation Funding	-	30,112
Ballymun Regeneration Limited	180,040	178,436
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	264,558	340,924
Operating expenses	(254,865)	(265,572)
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Net surplus	9,693	75,352
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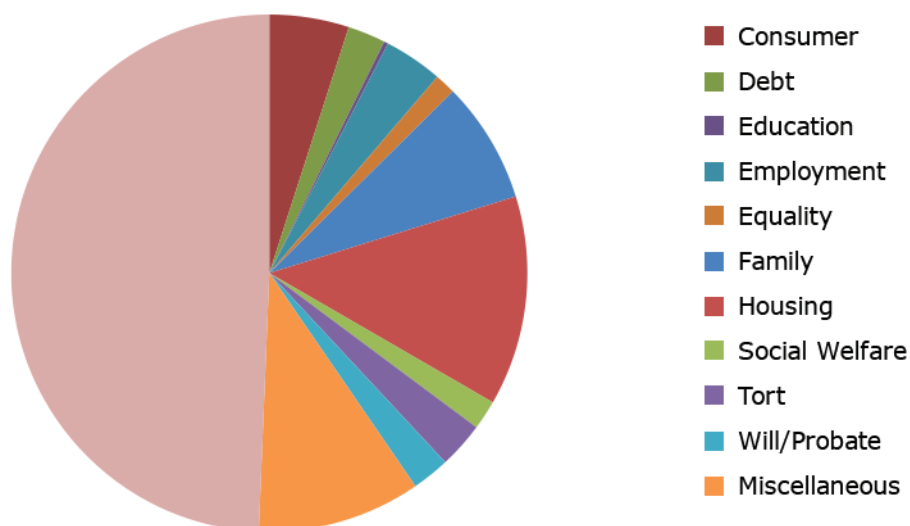
Operating Expenses

	2011	2010
	€	€
Legal Education Programme		
Facilitator/Tutor Costs	2,596	14,631
NCI Accreditation Cost	-	30,112
WRC Accreditation Cost	598	-
Room Hire	-	-
Miscellaneous Costs	383	2,276
Travel, Meals & Accommodation	1,435	1,547
Materials	150	810
	<u>5,162</u>	<u>49,376</u>
Staff Costs		
Payroll	180,178	165,145
PRSA	5,225	3,984
Staff Training	1,019	310
	<u>186,422</u>	<u>169,439</u>
Professional Fees		
Mediation Training & Supervision	1,722	2,005
	<u>1,722</u>	<u>2,005</u>
Overheads and Administration		
Marketing & Advertising	2,968	1,838
Printing, Postage and Stationery	4,974	5,966
Insurance	6,656	11,561
Light and Heat	535	1,070
Relocation Costs	16,148	-
Telephone & Communication	7,537	5,769
General expenses	3,855	3,123
Depreciation on FF & Equipment	354	1,953
Audit	1,751	1,954
Professional Fees	8,310	3,038
Travelling & Subsistence expenses	1,072	1,331
Equipment Maintenance & Support	2,337	4,060
Cleaning	3,849	2,438
Bank charges	406	376
Publications & Memberships	494	235
Room Hire	313	40
	<u>61,559</u>	<u>44,752</u>
Operating expenses	<u><u>254,865</u></u>	<u><u>265,572</u></u>

Solicitor Appointments Breakdown

Education	1
Employment	14
Equality	5
Family	29
Housing	50
Social Welfare	7
Will/Probate	9
Miscellaneous	39
Consumer	14
Debt	9
Tort	11
Total	188

Solicitor Appointments Breakdown

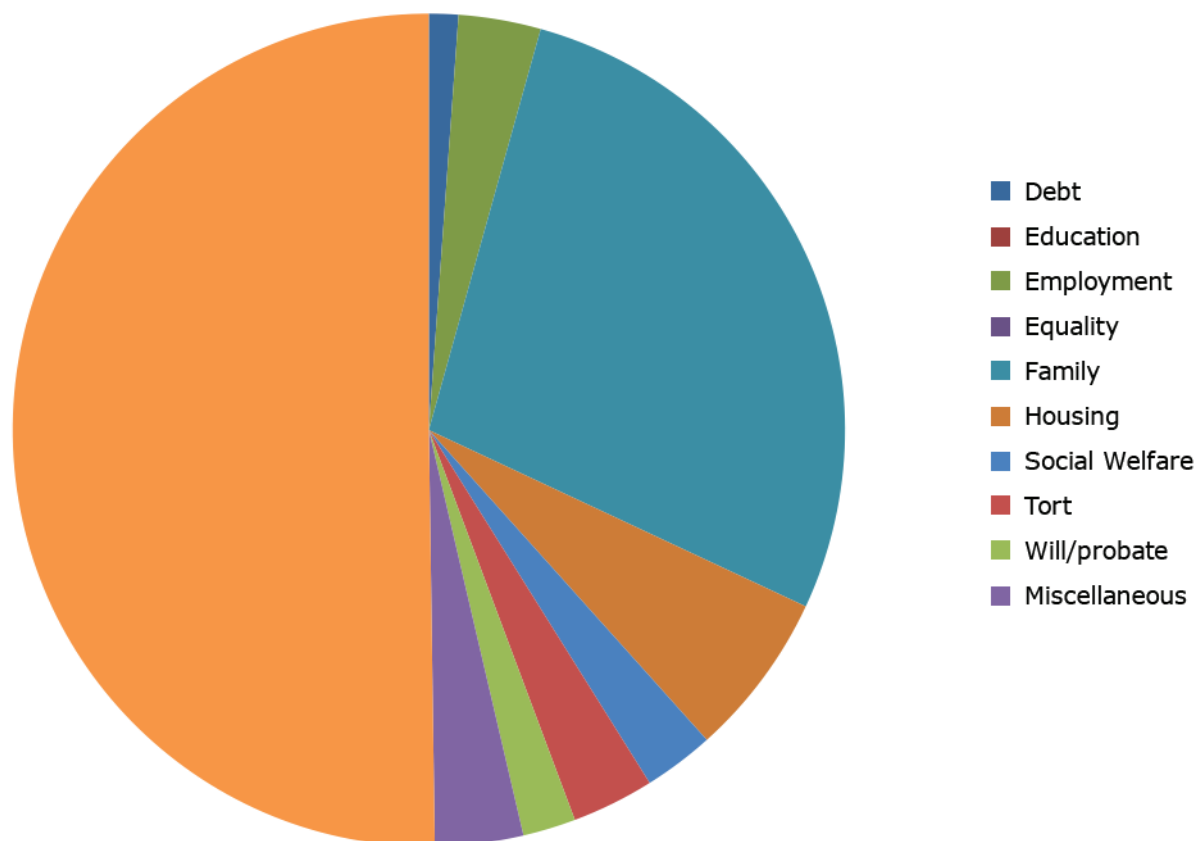


Family Law Statistics

Clients to new Clinic (from Autumn 2011)	18
Family Law information queries	121
Family Law advice in Outreach Clinics	29
Total	168

Information Queries

Consumer	2
Debt	5
Education	0
Employment	14
Equality	0
Family	121
Housing	28
Social Welfare	12
Tort	14
Will/Probate	9
Miscellaneous	15
Total	220





BCLC 10
 Celebrating 10 years of legal advice, representation, education and mediation



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