

# Ballymun Community Law Centre



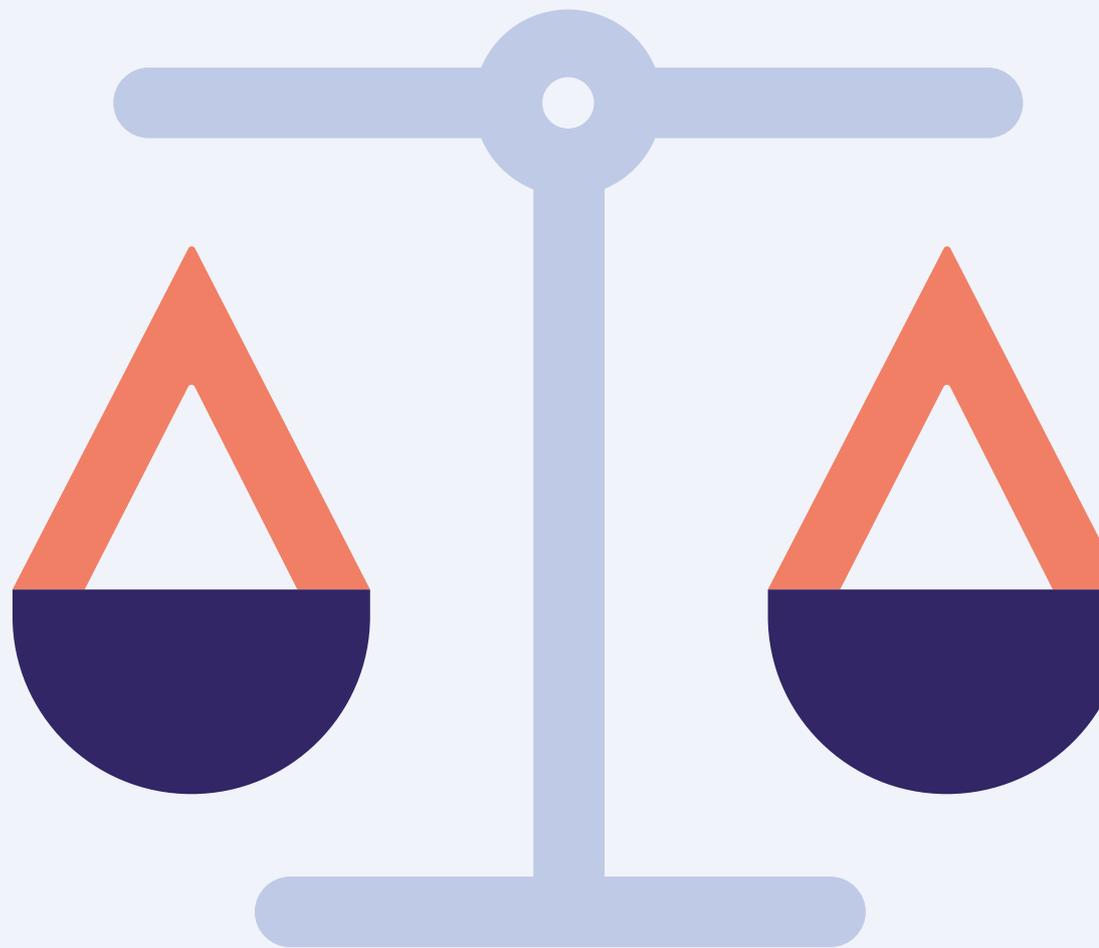
Legal Advice



Education



Mediation



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**Annual Report 2018**

**Welcome**

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# Contact Details & Advice Clinics

## Our Office

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### **Ballymun Community Law Centre**

Unit 1A Shangan Neighbourhood Centre,  
Shangan Road,  
Ballymun,  
Dublin 9.

Tel: (01) 862 58 05

Fax: (01) 891 68 48

Email: [info@bclc.ie](mailto:info@bclc.ie)

Website: [www.bclc.ie](http://www.bclc.ie)

### **Opening Hours**

Monday to Friday: 9am - 1pm, 2pm - 5pm.

## Local Advice Clinics

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### **Local Employment Office**

**First Tuesday** of every month:

Civic Centre, Main Street,  
Ballymun.

10am - 12 noon.

### **Ballymun Library**

**Second Tuesday** of every month:

Ballymun Road.

10am - 12 noon.

### **Poppintree Sports Centre**

**Third Tuesday** of every month:

Poppintree.

10am - 12 noon.

### **Ballymun Child & Family Resource Centre**

**Fourth Tuesday** of every month:

Shangan Green,  
Ballymun .

10am - 12 noon.

# Board of Directors & Staff

## Directors

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### Chair

Catherine Hickey

### Vice-chair

Karl Murphy

### Secretary

Fiona Gallagher

### Treasurer

Antoinette Doyle

Valerie O'Carroll

Pat Gilheaney (Resigned in November 2018)

Frank Murphy

Paul Kane.

## Staff

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**Legal Executive** – Full time Job Initiative Programme

Christina Beresford

**Project Officer** – 3 days a week

Sonya Keniry

**Managing Solicitor** – Maternity Leave

Mikayla Sherlock

**Managing Solicitor** – Full time

Gary Lee

**Solicitor / Legal Education Coordinator** – 3 days a week

Frank Murphy

**Manager** – 3 days a week

Ciara Murray

# Chairperson's Report

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“Our mission is to work towards an inclusive community based on equal human rights and social justice, and to support the people of Ballymun to access justice as a human right.”

## 2018 saw a number of changes in the law centre.

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In January we were pleased to welcome Gary Lee as Managing Solicitor. Gary brings considerable expertise in the area of disability law and is a valuable addition to the team. He is a member of the Law Society's human rights and equality committee and chairperson of the Mental Health Tribunals since 2006.

In November Pat Gilheaney stepped down from the Board after many years dedicated service. We wish him every success in his continuing work in the Legal Aid Board and thank him for his invaluable contribution to the work of the Law Centre over many years.

Throughout 2018 the Law Centre represented clients in a variety of civil law cases and provided legal information and advice to local people and organisations. Legal matters involving family, housing and employment law continue to dominate the needs of those presenting to the service. As in previous years our Legal Education Programme provided a range of courses including a new Child Law course, a variety of lunchtime talks, and we were again pleased to work with Community Law and Mediation to deliver accredited Family Rights Advocacy Training.

In 2018 BCLC continued to participate as an active member of the Independent Law Centres Network, the representative body for the national network of Independent Law Centres in Ireland.

The Network currently has a membership of 8 Independent Law Centres, all delivering a range of innovative legal services to financially and socially disadvantaged individuals and communities.

Much of the work of the Law Centre could not be delivered without our volunteers; mediators, barristers, teachers, lecturers, and organisation leaders. To all our volunteers, thank you for your generosity of time and on-going dedication to provide legal, education and mediation services to the people of Ballymun. A particular mention must be given to Mr Frank Murphy who is the driving force of the Legal Education Programme and our family law advice and information service.

In 2018, Dublin City Council continued to fund us through the Social Regeneration Programme as well as providing us with modern fit for purpose office premises in Shangan Neighbourhood Centre. We are very grateful to Dublin City Council for their ongoing support.

I would also like to thank the members of the Law Society of Ireland who generously support the Law Centre.

Finally, I would like to thank my fellow board members and the staff team at the Law Centre for their support throughout the year.



**Catherine Hickey**

Chairperson, Ballymun Community Law Centre.

# **Our Mission, Values & Strategic Objectives**

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“We understand your legal problems  
and we are here to help.”

## Mission

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Ballymun Community Law Centre (BCLC) is an independent not-for-profit community based law centre. BCLC provides free legal advice, representation, legal education and mediation services for individuals and groups within the community. Our mission is to work towards an inclusive community based on equal human rights and social justice, and to support the people of Ballymun to access justice as a human right.

## Values

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- We are committed to the principles of human rights, social justice, and equality.
- We are dedicated to the provision of high quality, accessible services.
- We strive to ensure that our systems and practices demonstrate integrity, transparency, and accountability.
- We are committed to developing community engagement with the law so that returns on public investment in our centre benefit as many as possible.
- We are committed to working in partnership with other organisations in order to deliver coordinated and targeted services.

## Our Strategic Objectives

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BCLC's principal objective is to improve access to justice for people in Ballymun. To achieve this we operate in three core areas of business.

### 1. Legal Services

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- Provision of legal advice, advocacy and representation services to the people of Ballymun.
- Providing advice and assistance by way of general advice and information, and referrals to other services as appropriate.

### 2. Legal Education & Training

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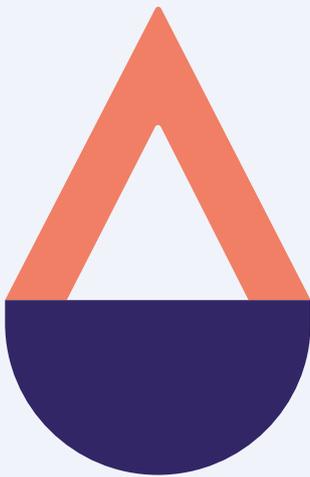
- Providing legal education and training to facilitate greater community legal knowledge and to support the progression of Ballymun residents into legal education and the legal professions. This objective is delivered through a legal education programme which is accessible to participants from other communities.

### 3. Mediation Services & Training

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- Promotion of mediation as a concept for dispute resolution in Ballymun.
- Provision of peer, family and community mediation services using trained volunteer mediators.
- Provision of accredited mediation education and training.

# Legal Services



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“Without the Law Centre I would be homeless, no doubt about it. I was going through a very hard time, you listened, understood and helped. Thank you so much.”

**Legal services client.**

## Legal Services

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Ballymun Community Law Centre (BCLC) provides legal advice, information and representation services to the people of Ballymun. The main areas of civil law that we work in are: housing, debt, consumer, equality, health, social welfare and employment. BCLC also delivers an information and advice service in the area of family law.

- In 2018 BCLC held 44 legal outreach clinics in Ballymun and 46 family law clinics.
- In 2018 housing related issues continued to be the main area of enquiry.
- In 2018 a significant cohort of clients presented with vulnerabilities requiring support services in addition to legal support. Specifically, mental health support and counselling services.
- In 2018 BCLC dealt with 464 legal matters. Client engagement might involve a simple once off enquiry or a more complex multi issue legal problem.

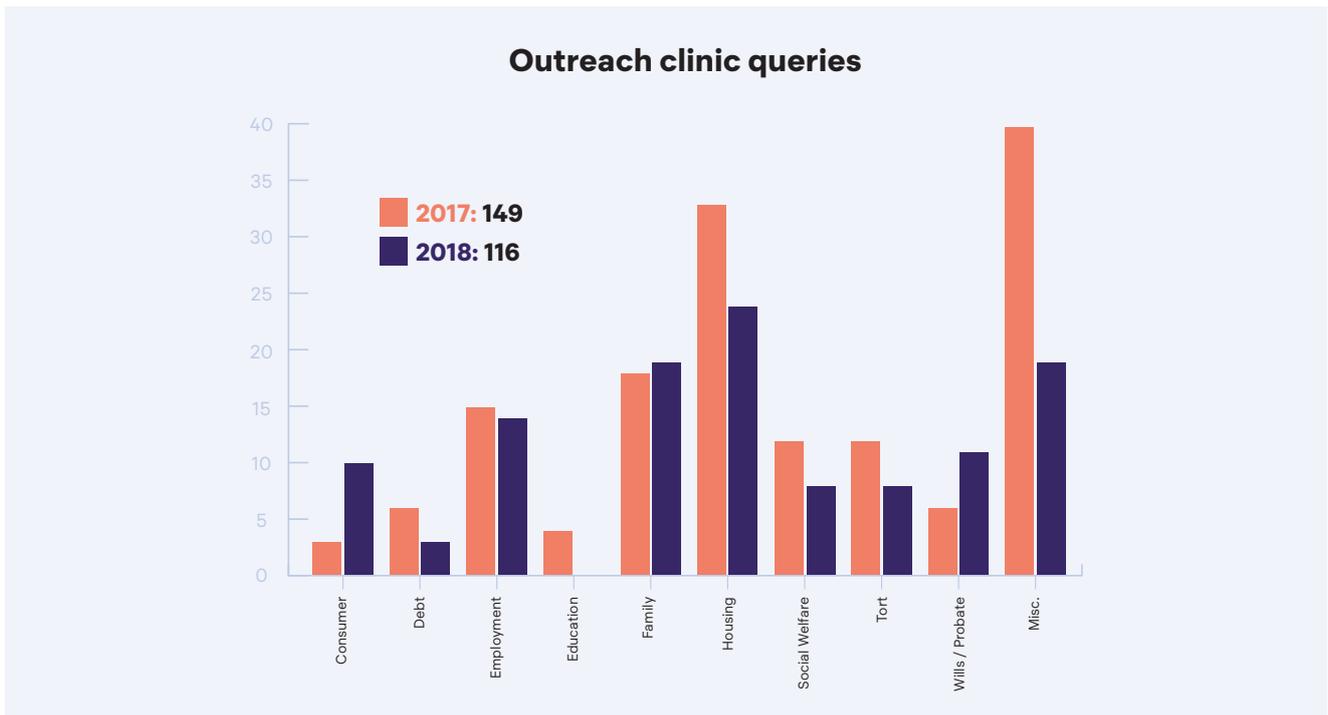
## Legal Information & Assistance

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The legal information service we provide refers to once off contacts with our office. Legal information is provided by our legal executive. Many of these queries are referred to us from other agencies, or people make contact based on word of mouth referrals from those who have used the service in the past.

People often contact the office for explanation, clarification and reassurance with respect to legal issues and legal proceedings; for example, a person may contact the centre in some distress, unable to articulate the specifics of their legal problem. Our legal executive will provide information and assistance and refer the matter internally to our solicitor where required. Frequent areas of enquiry relate to family law matters.

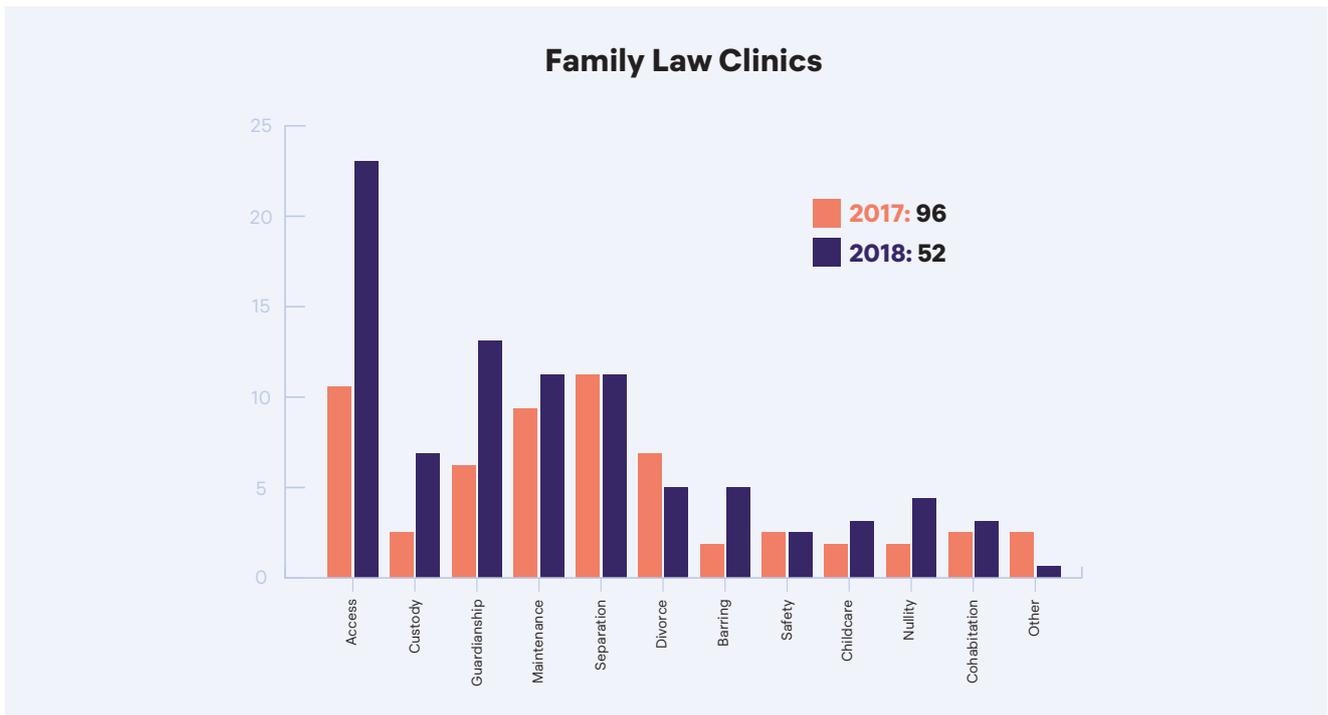
<b>Information &amp; Assistance</b> In 2018 there were 296 once off contacts made to BCLC from people looking for legal information and assistance. This is a 24% increase compared to the previous year. The largest areas of enquiry are family, employment and housing related matters.	Education	3
	Consumer	4
	Debt	2
	Employment	27
	Equality	3
	Family	103
	Housing	23
	Tort	7
	Wills and Probate	20
	Mediation	12
	Criminal	21
	Social Welfare	16
	Miscellaneous	55
<b>Total</b>	<b>296</b>	



## Outreach Advice Clinics

Throughout 2018 BCLC continued to provide regular and accessible free legal advice clinics in the community. Forty four clinics took place over the course of the year. This number does not include the family law clinics. A review of the statistics from the outreach clinics reveals the highest demand for legal information and advice is in the area of housing, family and employment law. The miscellaneous category includes matters that might arise on a few occasions, or issues that can be appropriately referred to another service. This category includes: company/commercial, nursing home/health, capacity, conveyancing, immigration, criminal, finance, anti-social behaviour/community safety. Where we can provide assistance, such as in the area of community mediation, the matter is referred internally for follow up.

It continues to be the case that the queries and cases undertaken by BCLC are complicated by the nature of the problems faced by the community and the challenge of navigating multiple administrative systems and organisations in order to address the issues that present. Furthermore, of those presenting there is a significant number who require ancillary support services such as mental health supports, mediation and family support services and counselling. The vulnerability of many clients therefore requires a more holistic approach to service delivery.



## Family Law Clinics

There were 47 family law clinics held in 2017. The clinics take place every Wednesday and attendance is by appointment only. The service covers all areas that fall within the family law category. The clinics provide advice on legislation and procedures and information on family mediation is also provided. A client might present with multiple issues; for example, an enquiry about child maintenance and a matter relating to access and/or guardianship rights. Our aim in providing the service is to ensure that clients are more empowered and informed in relation to family law matters particularly in circumstances where they will be accessing other legal services, mediation and/or dealing with family court proceedings. Where appropriate referrals are made to the Legal Aid Board and/private solicitors and other relevant agencies.



## Housing Queries

Housing related matters are the most common category of enquiry presenting. As the housing demographic in the community is predominantly social housing tenancies, this is reflected in the nature of the enquiries. Often the issues are complex and can relate to eviction, rent and supply/access issues. Allied to this are enquiries that concern local authority and private tenancy issues concurrently. This is due to the increase in the number of people accessing the Housing Assistance Payment (HAP) as a social housing support.

# Legal Education Programme



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“The course made the legal information very simple, accessible and comprehensive.”

**Family Law course participant.**

## Legal Education Programme

Our Legal Education Programme for 2018 was managed, and in many cases delivered, by Mr Frank Murphy with the assistance of Christina Beresford. A number of presenters gave their time freely to BCLC, their generosity reflected in the diversity and richness of the programme we were able to deliver. We are as always grateful for their generosity.

In 2018, in partnership with Community Law and Mediation, BCLC delivered accredited training in Family Rights Advocacy. In 2018 we also introduced a new Child Law Course delivered over four weeks. BCLC also offered an introductory course on Family Law, as well as facilitating a Law Club at Trinity Comprehensive School. Finally, as in previous years, BCLC hosted a series of lunchtime talks, one hour talks delivered by experts in their field.

## Lunchtime Talk Series & Seminars

### May 2018: Mental Health Law in Ireland

Gary Lee, Managing Solicitor (BCLC) delivered a talk on mental health law in Ireland at the Child and Family Resource Centre. He focused on the main legal areas affecting people with mental health issues and outlined the role of Mental Health Tribunals.

### 11 June 2018: Disability Law in Ireland talk and pop up advice clinic

Gary Lee, Managing Solicitor (BCLC) delivered a lecture on Disability Law in Ireland at the Central Remedial Clinic (CRC) as part of CRC carers week. The lecture was attended by people with disabilities, their families, carers and personal assistants together with members of CRC staff. Following the lecture BCLC, in partnership with the Free Legal Advice Centres (FLAC), met with a number of family members to answer legal queries at a 'pop up' law clinic.

### 1 October 2018: Accord

ACCORD works with couples and individuals supporting them in their marriages and relationships. Accord Chairperson and Counsellor, Rita Dunleavy, who has worked in Ballymun for 20 years, discussed the role of counselling in facilitating couples and individuals to work to resolve difficulties that arise in their relationships.

### 8 October 2018: Civil Legal Aid

John McDaid, Chief Executive of the Legal Aid Board, examined the Civil Legal Aid Act 1995, the Civil Legal Aid Regulations and the work of the Legal Aid Board.



**Carers Week - Disability Law in Ireland. Pictured (from left to right):** Zsé Varga FLAC, Gary Lee BCLC, Kuda Mushaya FLAC and Rachel Glennane CRC.

### 15 October 2018: The Role of Mediation

Sonya Keniry, Project Officer with Ballymun Community Law Centre, explained the mediation process, how people come together to discuss and attempt to solve their differences with a neutral mediator.

### 5 November 2018: Women's Aid

Ruth O'Dea, Manager of Training and Development at Women's Aid, explained the work of Women's Aid in supporting female victims of domestic violence.

### 19 November 2018: Victim Support at Court (V-SAC)

Niamh Lambers, Co-ordinator of V-SAC, outlined the support service provided by the organisation for victims of crime, their families, and witnesses. The service provides court accompaniment both before and during trial.

## Training Courses 2018

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### **Introduction to Family Law**

This course ran over four Monday mornings from Monday 26 February 2018. The course examined the legal framework as set out in the Constitution, legislation, case law and the European Convention on Human Rights. The course considered the practical application of the law in relation to family, children, child care, maintenance, cohabitation, marriage, separation and divorce.

### **Introduction to Child Law**

This course ran over four Monday mornings from Monday 9 April 2018. The course examined the Constitution, legislation, case law and the European Convention on Human Rights as applies to the area of Child Law. The course considered the law in relation to guardianship, custody, access, maintenance, the Child Care Act 1991 and the Child and Family Relationships Act 2015.

### **Family Rights Advocacy (QQI Accredited)**

This course ran over 12 weeks (half day a week) from Monday 24 September 2018. This course provided students with a basic understanding of the Irish legal system and family law. Students developed an awareness of the main features of family law, how legislation impacts on relationships and became familiar with the legal language, procedures and court documents relevant to family law. Students also developed skills in reflection, advocacy, and the ability to apply what they learned in the workplace.

### **Trinity Comprehensive School Law Club**

As in previous years, BCLC facilitated a Law Club at Trinity Comprehensive School. Students participated in four classes on topics that included the Irish Legal System, the Constitution, European Law, and how the Courts operate when hearing cases. Students also examined some of the most topical cases that were of interest to them.



# Mediation Services



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“...in Garda interviews we tend to use closed questions to control the direction of the interview. Mediation took me out of my comfort zone and showed me a whole new method of interviewing. Really enjoyed the course and I am sure it will benefit me in my current role.”

**Garda David Moore, Participant on Community Mediation Training Course.**

## Mediation Services

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In 2018 the law centre continued to provide family and community mediation services. The mediation service is delivered on a pro bono basis by a core group of qualified mediators. BCLC is grateful to all our mediators who continue to provide their time and dedication to support this work. As in previous years in 2018 we worked with local schools to facilitate a Peer Mediation Programme. BCLC as part of a mediation services network also continued working with the Courts Service of Ireland to ensure effective referral of cases from the courts.

## Community Mediation

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- In 2018 there were 9 referrals to BCLC for community mediation services. Of those four progressed to mediation.

Throughout the year the law centre received regular enquiries from Ballymun residents considering community mediation as a means to resolve disputes. The nature of the disputes varies widely and can include noise disputes, inter-family issues, referrals from the Gardaí and building management issues.

## Family Mediation

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- In 2018 there were 20 new referrals to the family mediation service. Of those, four cases progressed to mediation.

There has been an increase in the time needed to support the variety and complexity of the issues presenting for family mediation. Matters relate to blended families, couples whose first language is not English as well as an increase in the number of cases where one or other participant asserts that they are fearful of the other participant to the mediation. Particular cases can present challenging circumstances which reinforce our obligation to ensure that each participant fully understands the mediation process.

## Peer Mediation in Ballymun schools

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Peer mediation is an internationally recognised programme of conflict resolution aimed at children aged 11 & 12, who are usually in 5th and 6th class. 2018 marked the ninth year in which BCLC delivered a peer mediation programme in Ballymun Schools. In 2018 the programme was delivered in Virgin Mary Boys School, Virgin Mary Girls School and Our Lady of Victories.

## Courts Mediation Service

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Mediation Service, Ballymun Community Law Centre, Community Law and Mediation and Dublin Community Mediation. In 2018 the law centre continued to participate in this project and attended and managed at least one court clinic every three weeks. The steering group representing the courts service and the participating mediation service providers met four times during the year. There were also a couple of ad-hoc training sessions during the year

## Mediation Training & Support

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As in previous years, in 2018 the BCLC offered accredited training for new mediators. This training was delivered by Geoffrey Corry (trainer and mediator).

### **Conflict resolution and mediation skills training (MII Accredited)**

This accredited programme for mediators ran in the first half of 2018. It is a two module accredited 60 hour programme. Module 1 took place in May 2018 and Module 2 in June/July 2018.

### **Learning and sharing peer support meetings**

As part of our support for the work of our volunteer mediators BCLC facilitated two shared learning meetings during 2018.

### **Conflict Coaching**

During 2018 BCLC supported 11 participants achieve certification in conflict coaching. This was achieved with the support of Mary Lou Kennedy the course manager and trainer. Virtual tutorials took place over three months as well as role play sessions and the facilitation of independent study groups.

The commitment of the volunteer coaches to providing this new service to the Ballymun Community is greatly valued by the Law Centre. In 2018 we took our first referrals and look forward to expanding the service in 2019.

The aim of the service is to assist those in conflict establish a goal and form a plan to manage the conflict situation. This is challenging as it requires the participant to examine the conflict situation from different perspectives to identify an effective approach for the purpose of resolution.



# **Financial Report 2018**

## Income & Expenditure for year ending 31st December 2018

	2017	2018
	€	€
<b>Income</b>	<b>204,436</b>	<b>172,910</b>
Expenditure	187,618	141,289
<b>(Deficit) / surplus for the financial year</b>	<b>16,818</b>	<b>31,621</b>

### Statement of financial position as of 31st December 2018

<b>Current Assets</b>		
Debtors	5,903	5,063
Cash at bank and in hand	281,016	308,679
	<u>286,919</u>	<u>313,742</u>
Creditors: amounts falling due		
Within one year	<u>(35,188)</u>	<u>(30,390)</u>
Net current assets	251,731	283,352
<b>Total assets less current liabilities</b>	<u>251,731</u>	<u>283,352</u>
<b>Net assets</b>	<u>251,731</u>	<u>283,352</u>
<b>Capital and Reserves</b>		
Sustainability reserve	200,855	200,855
Capital Fund	33,507	33,507
Income and expenditure account	17,369	48,990
<b>Members funds</b>	<b>251,731</b>	<b>283,352</b>

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legal problems and  
we're here to help.**

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**Legal Advice**



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