

Impact Report

Five Year Review
2012 to 2016



Martin Rowson 16



Public Law Project

Since 1990 the Public Law Project has worked tirelessly to improve access to public law remedies for those who cannot obtain justice due to poverty, discrimination or other disadvantage.

It has done this by:

increasing the accountability of public bodies

enhancing the quality of decision-making

improving access to justice

PLP discharges its charitable objectives through a unique combination of research, policy initiatives, casework and training.

www.publiclawproject.org.uk

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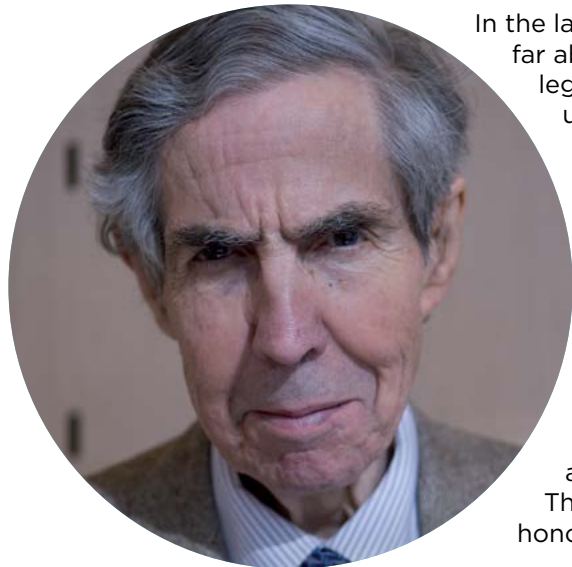


ALLEN & OVERY

AB Charitable Trust



Introduction from PLP patrons Sir Henry Brooke



In the last five years this small charity has been punching far above its weight. Although we knew in 2011 that legal aid cuts would imperil the principles that underlie universal access to justice, we believed that access to judicial review would be relatively unscathed. How wrong we were.

PLP rose to the occasion magnificently. For the time being it has beaten off the misbegotten residence test. It co-ordinated the opposition to the parsimonious exceptional funding scheme. And its track record of meticulous evidence-based research enabled it to counter some of the Government's anecdote-based, ideology-driven proposals with detailed facts and figures which often made ministers think again. The war is not yet won, but PLP has many battle honours to its credit.

I was pleased to be able to contribute my three penny worth of insights and memories to the excellent guide to Part 4 of the CJCA 2015 which PLP, JUSTICE and the Bingham Centre co-authored. I am full of admiration for PLP's involvement in carefully selected strategic litigation. The Justice First Fellowship is an exciting new venture. And the quality of PLP's training events is second to none.

Hurrah for PLP. I am proud to be its patron.

Baroness Helena Kennedy QC



In the summer of 2016 I was proud to be asked to join Sir Henry Brooke as a patron of the Public Law Project, and in that capacity I am delighted to share the opportunity to introduce this impact report.

Whilst I had long known and respected PLP, I had not perhaps appreciated the true reach and extent of its recent work. Advocating for migrants, for those who lack capacity, for those seeking to escape domestic violence, for the everyday man or woman on the street, PLP has done unparalleled work to advance, both in principle and in practice, the cause of access to justice.

Looking as it does at the impact of PLP's work on legal aid as well as other key areas of focus, this report provides a great opportunity to reflect on the successes of the last five years, as well to offer a glimpse of the approach and priorities that will shape this essential charity's work over the next five years. These look to be interesting times, and I am glad that PLP will feature in them.

Access to justice and the Legal Aid Support Project (LASP)

Withdrawal and restriction of legal aid in England and Wales has left huge swathes of the population without any means of redress against injustice.

Amnesty International's recent report 'Cuts that Hurt' describes the decimation of access to justice that has 'left thousands of the most vulnerable...without essential legal advice and support'. The recent UN report of the Committee on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities highlights the impact that lack of legal resources has on the treatment of people with disabilities, who are unable to find remedies to challenge unlawful withdrawal of support from the state and have their rights upheld. It became obvious from the early stages of the legal aid reforms that to fulfil its mission PLP would have to, if at all possible, mitigate the impact of cuts to legal aid.

The key legislation driving these reforms is the Legal Aid, Sentencing and Punishment of Offenders Act 2012, commonly known as "LASPO". PLP's strategic response is the Legal Aid Support Project, or LASP. Through LASP we have monitored the implementation of LASPO, helped people to access legal aid, and brought strategic legal challenges to defend and in some cases even improve access to justice.

The Residence Test

In April 2013 the Government introduced the idea of a 'residence test' for civil legal aid. In general terms, they proposed that only people who were lawfully resident in the UK, and who had been so for a year, should be eligible for legal aid. It would, therefore, exclude significant groups of vulnerable people.

PLP brought a challenge to the proposal in our own name. The evidence that we put before the Court contained many examples of people who would be unable to get legal aid if the residence test was introduced. These included a woman with learning disabilities who had been imprisoned in a kennel by her husband's family, and children left destitute as a result of local authority disputes over responsibility.

The case was heard by the Supreme Court on 18 April 2016 and the Court took the almost unprecedented step of allowing our appeal at the end of that day. Because of our challenge, the residence test has not been introduced, and those it would have affected can continue to access legal aid.



“Every day there will be people who get legal aid who would not have got it had the residence test been brought in – and that has been true of every day for the past two years. Hundreds and thousands of people affected – we don’t know how many as the government didn’t produce any estimates when they made the proposals. But it’s many.”

From the independent evaluation of the work of the Strategic Legal Fund for Vulnerable Young Migrants.

Making Exceptional Case Funding Accessible

A particular focus of our LASP work has been the Exceptional Case Funding (“ECF”) scheme established under LASPO. ECF was supposed to provide a safety net for those whose rights would be breached if they did not receive funding, but we were concerned that it would not actually do so. Our concerns appeared to be well founded when, in the first year of the scheme, only one percent of applications for ECF were granted.

Through our Exceptional Funding Project PLP has assisted over 150 people to make applications for ECF and provided support in relation to the scheme to many others. Notably PLP assisted 25% of all applicants who were granted ECF between 1 April 2013 and 31 March 2015.

Case Study: Mr Miah

“I came to PLP for help getting exceptional funding as I could not find anyone else to help me. I lost my job in May 2013 and after that I was not able to make any progress in my case because I had no legal aid and no way of paying for a lawyer. Without PLP’s help I would have found it very difficult to have the same contact with my children as an able-bodied person. I am disabled and I talk through a voice box which people often do not understand. With the help of my lawyer, I was able to get a fair hearing from the court and now have more contact with my children.”



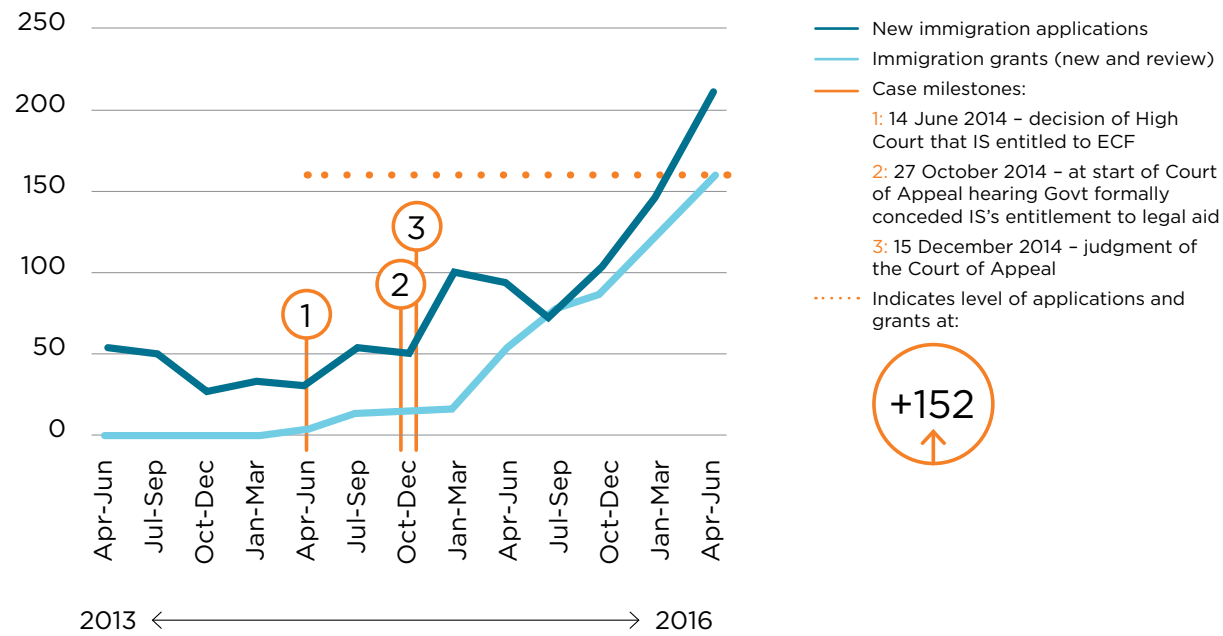
Image: Mr Miah. Credit: Express & Star.

Making Exceptional Case Funding Accessible

The Exceptional Funding Project has also enabled us to monitor the approach of the Legal Aid Agency to ECF decision-making, and use the information gathered to inform litigation brought with the aim of improving access to the scheme.

Notably, PLP acted for Mr I.S., a blind, mentally incapacitated, Nigerian man who needed to regularise his immigration status which was essential for him to be able to access the support he needed. Although he was clearly unable to make an immigration application without assistance, and only a lawyer could legally assist him, Mr I.S. was refused ECF. PLP represented him in a judicial review challenge to that decision. As a result, Mr I.S. was granted ECF and the government was forced to abandon its position that there was no right to legal aid for non-asylum immigration cases. This change led to a significant increase in the availability of ECF, particularly for immigration cases about families being allowed to live together in the UK, or people who have lived here for many years. The figures for the table below are taken from the Legal Aid Agency's own statistics, which show that there has been a huge increase in the number of people being granted ECF for immigration cases. For example, 153 applications were granted in April-June 2016, as compared to one grant made in the same quarter in 2013.

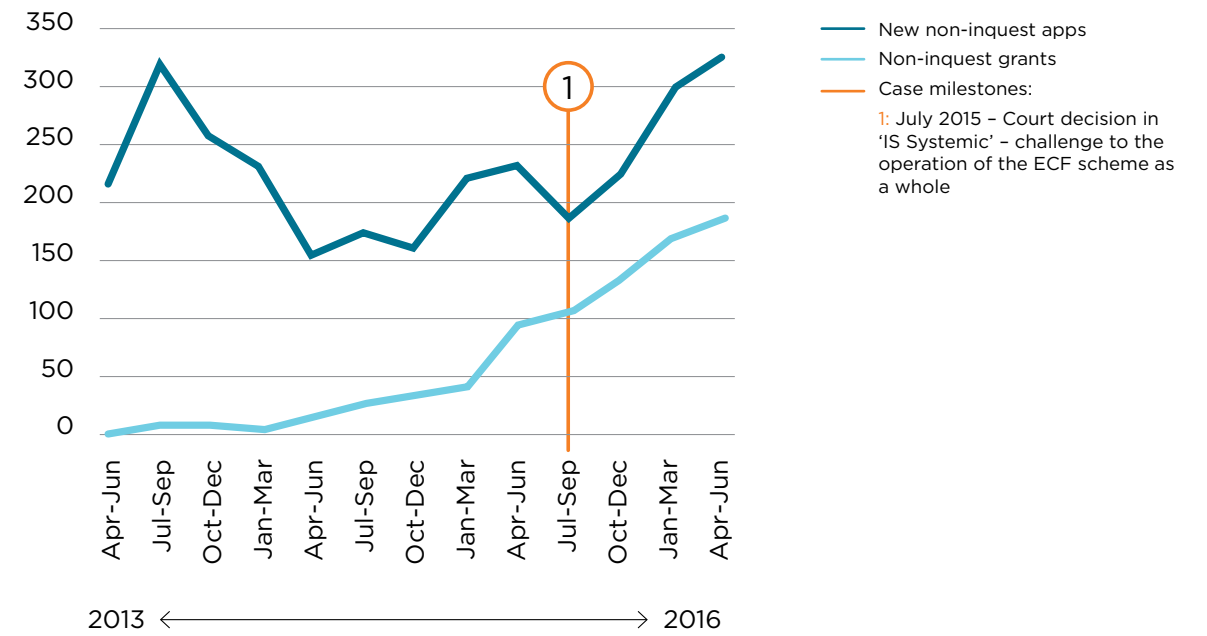
Change in Immigration Applications and grants for Exceptional Case Funding following IS's case.



As is shown by the graph below... these improvements have contributed to a significant increase in the number of successful ECF applications.

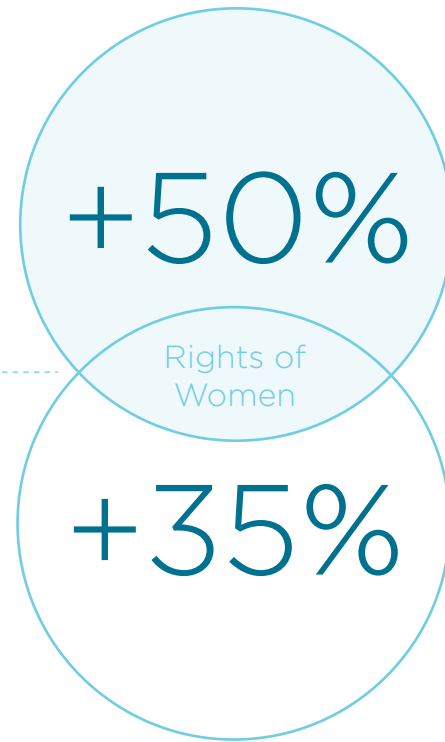
The Official Solicitor was so concerned by the information which PLP shared with him about the problems with the ECF scheme that he instructed PLP, on behalf of Mr I.S., to bring a challenge to the operation of the ECF scheme as a whole. Evidence gathered through our Exceptional Funding Project, and from many other lawyers and charities, showed that the ECF scheme was inaccessible in practice, particularly to people who did not have a lawyer. As a result of the litigation, limited improvements were made to the scheme, such as the introduction of a shortened application form. As is shown by the graph below, which is based on the Legal Aid Agency's statistics, these improvements have contributed to a significant increase in the number of successful ECF applications. In April-June 2013, there were just three grants of ECF in non-inquest cases, but by the same quarter in 2016, 188 applications were successful. However, despite these increases PLP remains concerned that people who are entitled to ECF are not able to access it in practice.

Application and grant rates for Exceptional Case Funding (non-inquest apps)



Case Study: Ms Turkey, ECF and wider injustices.

In a ground-breaking judgment in 2015 the Employment Tribunal upheld numerous claims, including those for unpaid wages and religious and race discrimination, brought by Ms Turkey, an Indian woman kept in domestic servitude by her employers for 4 ½ years. The Legal Aid Agency refused to fund Ms Turkey's representation for 17 months, suggesting that the case was not of "sufficient importance or seriousness" and that it was "only a claim for money". PLP helped Ms Turkey to apply for Exceptional Case Funding, which was only successful after PLP started a judicial review claim on her behalf. The case will affect future claims by victims of discrimination and servitude and would not have been possible were it not for PLP's LASP.



more applications for legal aid for family cases were received from survivors of domestic violence in April-June 2016 than in the same quarter in the previous year

increase in the number of applications granted following PLP and Rights of Women's litigation

Resisting Other Threats to Legal Aid

Although Parliament had decided that survivors of domestic violence should be eligible for legal aid in family proceedings, strict evidence requirements were preventing many from getting legal aid. PLP represented the charity Rights of Women in a challenge to the evidence requirements and following the Court of Appeal's judgment, the Government introduced new regulations which allow applicants to rely on a wider range of evidence of domestic abuse. Again, the impact of the case is illustrated by the Legal Aid Agency's statistics: in April-June 2016 over 50% more applications for legal aid in family cases were received from survivors of domestic violence than in the same quarter in the previous year, and there was a 35% increase in the number of applications granted.

In April 2014 the Government introduced regulations which threatened access to legal aid for judicial review claims, particularly for vulnerable people with complex cases. Under these regulations, lawyers would have to prepare judicial review cases for court without any certainty of being paid for their work. PLP represented a coalition of law firms and a charity to challenge these regulations. After the case succeeded, new regulations were introduced which present less of a financial risk to providers, and so are less of a barrier to justice for people who need to hold the state to account.

PLP also successfully resisted the introduction of a clause into the Legal Aid Agency's criminal contracts that could have prevented firms from legitimately criticising or challenging the Legal Aid Agency and the government.

The clause allowed for firms to be penalised or have their contracts ended if they did anything that 'embarrassed' or brought the Legal Aid Agency 'into disrepute.' In response to a pre-action letter sent by PLP on behalf of a law firm and a practitioners' association, the Legal Aid Agency confirmed that it would not use the clause to stifle criticism or challenge, and that it would consult with, amongst others, the Law Society and the Bar Council, before deciding whether to revise the clause or make a statement clarifying its meaning.



CASEWORK

Supporting access to welfare benefits, community care and other forms of support

Austerity measures and funding cuts have affected the poorest the hardest. PLP's casework tackles 'gate keeping' policies by local and central government, where vulnerable groups and individuals are unlawfully denied access to support often essential to basic human dignity.

Helping destitute migrant children and their families

For many destitute migrant families the only form of financial assistance available is 'Section 17 support', a form of community care available under section 17 of the Children Act 1989.

PLP has encountered many families suffering as a result of this support not being given, including homeless families with babies and small children sleeping on night buses, or on friends' floors in dangerously overcrowded conditions, living with disrepair and vermin infestations, and people resorting to begging on the streets and seeking unsafe accommodation from strangers.

Between 2012 and 2013 PLP carried out pre-litigation research funded by the Strategic Legal Fund for Vulnerable Young Migrants to assist destitute migrant families to obtain Section 17 support from local authority social services, where access was restricted unlawfully. This particularly affects single parents who are unable to work sufficient hours to support their families yet are also excluded from most state support. As part of this work, PLP made Freedom of Information Act requests to obtain local authorities' policies on providing support to destitute migrants under Section 17 and developed a guide for advisers.

Following on from this work, PLP has undertaken a number of cases in which our lawyers succeeded in obtaining financial support and accommodation, preventing or ending destitution for these children.



Case Study: Specialist legal advice

PLP's Legal Director advised the children's charity Article 39 about the lawfulness of the controversial "innovation clauses" in the Children and Social Work Bill 2016. The clauses would have allowed the Government to exempt local authorities from their statutory duties to vulnerable children in order to "test new ways of working". Article 39 used PLP's advice to inform its successful advocacy and campaigning around the clauses which were defeated in the House of Lords and dropped by the Government when the Bill returned to the Commons.



Support under Section 17 Children Act 1989

1400+

PLP's Guide downloads

Protecting people with mental health conditions from discrimination

Major concerns have been raised by disability groups, health professionals and the press as to whether the Department of Work and Pensions (DWP) has suppressed statistics of suicides following Work Capability Assessments (WCA's) of highly vulnerable people. PLP acted for claimants arguing that the WCA, which all Employment and Support Allowance claimants are required to undergo, discriminated against people with mental health conditions. As part of the assessment, responsibility to provide medical evidence of any condition to be taken into account was placed on the claimants. Mind, the National Autistic Society, Rethink Mental Illness and the Equality and Human Rights Commission all intervened in PLP's case giving evidence to support the claim that this was discriminatory and distressing for clients. The Court of Appeal agreed that this requirement was discriminatory but unfortunately dismissed the individual claims because it said that it would not have made a difference in these particular cases.

The Court also found that it could not decide whether the Claimants' proposal to improve the assessment process (by allowing the claimant to submit medical evidence at the outset, prior to the assessment) was a 'reasonable adjustment' until the DWP piloted the changes to make the system fairer. Sadly, the DWP has still failed at this point to undertake the pilot, even though the court gave them time to do so.

PLP was able to take on this case because of its outreach work with disability groups, and by doing so, helped bring legal scrutiny to a dangerous practice by the DWP, and helped a disabled group voice their concerns and use their experiences to challenge Government policy through the courts.

Protecting access to sickness benefits for over 1 million UK nationals living in other EU countries.

Mrs Tolley, who had worked and made National Insurance contributions in the UK for many years, moved to Spain after becoming so disabled that she could not cook a meal for herself. She challenged the Department of Work and Pension's decision, that because she had moved to Spain, she was no longer entitled to claim the care component of Disability Living Allowance. The EU Court of

Justice rejected the Government's arguments. Its decision will mean that people like Mrs Tolley can continue to get sickness benefits when they move to live in another European country if they have prior authorisation from the DWP.

Helping families keep in contact

PLP represented an asylum seeker who had a child with a British Citizen mother though they had subsequently split up. The Home Office accommodated PLP's client in asylum support accommodation over a hundred miles away from the mother and child. He had been waiting for over eight years for his claim to be decided and he could not afford to travel to see his child as he received just the standard asylum support package of £36.95 per week. The mother very much wanted to support contact but she was of modest means and unable to help financially. The Court declared that the Home Office's refusal to provide any travel costs in these circumstances was unlawful. This decision will help others in similar circumstances as it is now clear that the Home Office's obligation to asylum seekers can include covering travel costs to facilitate contact with close family members in certain circumstances, and Home Office policy has been updated to make this clear.



CASEWORK

Secret courts, fair hearings and 'assurances' from countries which are known human rights abusers:

PLP's work in the Special Immigration Appeals Commission (SIAC) cuts to the heart of issues around fairness, justice and the rule of law. SIAC is the 'secret court' that deals with appeals by people being deported where the government considers national security an issue. The cases it deals with are about whether an individual's deportation or exclusion from the UK and their detention or bail conditions is justified on grounds of national security.

The cases that PLP has been involved in have been characterised by two distinctive features:

1

The use by the Government of 'closed' evidence, where the person appealing to the court will know little or nothing of the allegations against them and will not have an opportunity to challenge them to resist deportation, exclusion, detention, or highly restrictive bail conditions. The question in these cases is whether any, and if so how much, of the case must be disclosed in order to give the person a fair hearing.

2

The 'deportation with assurances' programme: in these cases the Government accepts that a deportee would normally be at risk of torture or mistreatment after they are deported, so it obtains an 'assurance' from the authorities of that country that it will not torture or mistreat that particular individual. The question in these cases is whether the country in question can be trusted and whether it is possible to check after the person is deported.

ZZ - exclusion of a French national from the UK on grounds of national security.

He had been granted permanent residence in the UK after living and working here for many years with his British family, but was excluded from the UK whilst on a trip to Algeria. SIAC had to consider whether EU law made any difference to its strict duty not to disclose the national security case against him. SIAC decided that EU law did make a difference and it required that a person exercising EU law rights had to be given the 'essence of the grounds' i.e. the gist of the case against him. SIAC's procedure rules are now read in this way so the case caused a major change in the law.

BB and W were both Algerians who were facing deportation to Algeria.

In their cases the UK Government had obtained 'assurances' from Algeria that they would not be mistreated and tortured if they were deported. The secretive Algerian 'military security' wields considerable power in Algeria, independently of the civilian Government, and as it was accepted BB and W would end up in their hands, SIAC decided that it was not possible to adequately check on what would happen to them. The assurances could not be relied on and the men would be at risk of torture or mistreatment if deported to Algeria.

PLP's first Justice First Fellow!

The Justice First Fellowship (JFF) scheme was established by the Legal Education Foundation (LEF) to support law graduates committed to pursuing a career in public interest and social justice law. In its first year it funded nine training contracts in legal advice organisations across the UK.

Meet Katy....

I joined PLP in January 2015 as its first Justice First Fellow. For the first few months I worked on PLP's exceptional case funding (ECF) project, helping clients access legal aid and assisting with litigation arising out of the project. It was extremely satisfying to see first-hand the improvements to the ECF scheme and the increase in the grant rate as a result of the I.S. case succeeding in the High Court (see infographic page 5 and 6).

In my second year I began to build a caseload of my own. I also joined the Asylum Support Appeals Project duty scheme, representing destitute asylum seekers in the Asylum Support Tribunal. It's been nerve wracking but exciting to develop my advocacy skills, and I was very pleased to win my first hearing, obtaining accommodation and support for a destitute asylum seeker who had been sleeping rough after his application for support was refused.

I also set up a project designed to help men with convictions and cautions for consensual gay sex offences apply to the Home Office to have them disregarded. When the government proposed the 'Turing Law' in October this year, I was able to use the knowledge I'd gained under the project and respond by writing an article in the Independent, reflecting on one of our client's experiences.



Being a JFF at PLP has provided development opportunities beyond those of the average training contract. I spoke at the PLP Wales Conference in 2016, and have delivered training and support to other organisations. The JFF scheme also provides training in fundraising, project planning and social media, all incredibly useful skills to have as a lawyer in an organisation like PLP. I've also made lasting friendships with the other Fellows, and hope to build on that network with future projects.

Katy qualified as a solicitor (at PLP!) in January 2017, and PLP already has a new affiliate JFF in Joe Vester, who comes to the role after serving as a paralegal at PLP.

...and meet Joe



I'm really pleased to have become a Justice First Fellow in January 2017. It's an opportunity to be a part of a network of lawyers who share experiences and ideas which is so important for having the greatest possible impact.

Research & policy: Evidence in a post-truth world

Recent years have provided a number of opportunities to evidence the continued value and relevance of PLP's research and policy functions.

When we last considered the impact of PLP's research, in 2011, the government's consultation response that was to become LASPO had just been published. The cuts proposed in the name of austerity were harsh, but judicial review was not a target. Indeed, it was expressly recognised to play a key constitutional role.

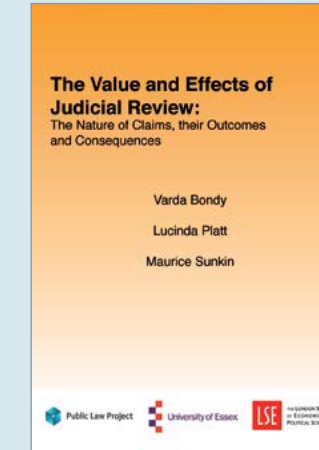
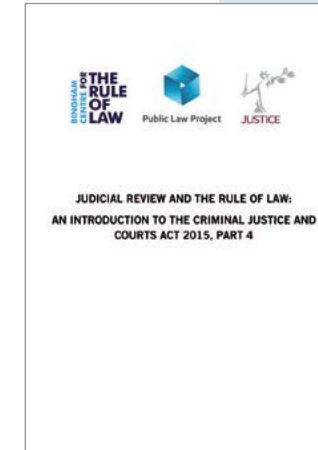
But shortly thereafter the Government's position appeared to change. In 2012 the first proposals for reform followed a speech in which David Cameron characterised judicial review as 'red tape' and bad for business. Then in 2013 came proposals for further reform, supported by a Daily Mail column by then Lord Chancellor: "The judicial review system is not a promotional tool for countless Left-wing campaigners."

The government proposed to amend the standing rules to make it harder for representative claims in the public interest, and to amend the costs rules to make such cases riskier (despite the consultation expressly recognising that such claims tended to have higher than average prospects of success). They also proposed to make it easier for Defendants to defend judicial review proceedings (even where they had acted unlawfully) and to recover their costs. Such proposals were said to be a necessary response to abuse of the system.

Our published research (including 'The Dynamics of Judicial Review Litigation') and ongoing analysis provided a robust evidence base against which such claims could be objectively tested, and enabled us to respond forensically to each of the many consultations. The articles "Judicial Review Reform: 'Who is afraid of judicial review? Debunking the myths of growth and abuse' and 'How Many JRs are too many? An evidence based response to 'Judicial Review: Proposals for Further Reform'" amongst other papers, demonstrated that the available statistics did not support the governmental position. PLP research was widely cited by other consultees and commentators.

The Criminal Justice & Courts Bill was laid before Parliament in February 2014. Whilst the proposals to restrict claimants standing were abandoned, and seemingly in the face of all available evidence, the government persisted with the claim that there remained a problem with abuse and a case for reform.

Throughout 2014 PLP continued to provide written briefings for parliamentarians and for civil society groups, met with individual parliamentarians, held a briefing session in the Lords and gave oral evidence to the Bill Committee. Some concessions were obtained, perhaps in part through the efforts of PLP and others, but the Act received royal assent in February 2015.



Ministers had stressed that reform was intended to prevent abuse and not to undermine its role as a check on executive power. Thus, jointly with JUSTICE and the Bingham Centre for the Rule of Law, we produced a guide to promote interpretation consistently with such intentions. In September 2015, we published "Judicial Review and the Rule of Law: An Introduction to the Criminal Justice and Courts Act 2015, Part 4," which Lord Woolf of Barnes praised for its timeliness and simplicity, and concluded:

"I commend its contents without qualification and very much hope that judges, lawyers and anyone else who is involved with the Act will have the benefit of being assisted by its contents. If this is the result, then my fears for damage to the rule of law will be substantially reduced."

Later that year we also finalized "The Value & Effects of Judicial Review: The Nature of Claims, their Outcomes and Consequences". The empirical research study, conducted together with the University of Essex & the London School of Economics examined 502 cases. This explored the consequences of judicial review (both for individual claimants and for the law in general) and obtained significant fresh data on levels of costs (including the relationship between legal aid and outcomes).

Throughout, we kept a keen eye on the concurrent changes to legal aid. Other parts of this report address PLP's casework response to access to justice concerns arising from LASPO, but there was also a clear research need. In particular, LASPO had introduced

a significant new power to restrict choice in service delivery. The initial application of a telephone 'gateway' to access any advice in three areas of law (education, discrimination and debt) was described as a pilot, with expansion to other areas of work planned subject to the conclusions of a Ministry of Justice review.

Thus PLP undertook its own, complimentary review, and in March 2015 published 'The Keys to the Gateway: An Independent Review of the Mandatory Civil Legal Advice Gateway'. This publication consisted of a detailed review (including a gap analysis) of the Ministry of Justice's own review. We identified not only a lack of evidence that the gateway met stated Parliamentary and policy intentions, but indications that such intentions might in fact be being actively undermined. The conclusions of the report were widely disseminated, discussed at the All Party Parliamentary Group for Legal Aid, PLP's London conference, and were reported in the legal press. They contributed to a landscape in which the stated aim of expansion of the gateway is not, for now, being actively pursued. If and when such an issue is revisited, PLP's research findings will be of keen relevance to any executive decision-maker.

So in conclusion, it is clear that not only has PLP research continued to inform public debate but that it has been actively deployed to preserve and promote access to justice and the rule of law. We look forward to developing our research programme still further in the years to come.



Shaheed Fatima QC, Martha Spurrier, Director of Liberty, Alberto Costa MP and Aidan O'Neill QC (Scot).

Training & Conferences

PLP runs a unique national programme of conferences and training. Our programme broadly supports and helps achieve PLP's objectives by:

Training lawyers, advisers and other NGOs in public law

Training people working in government to make better decisions

Helping build a sense of community and purpose amongst practitioners

Sharing knowledge and developing new relationships

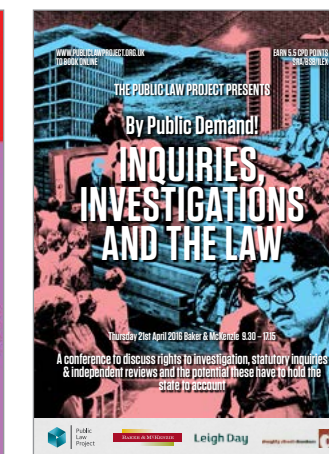
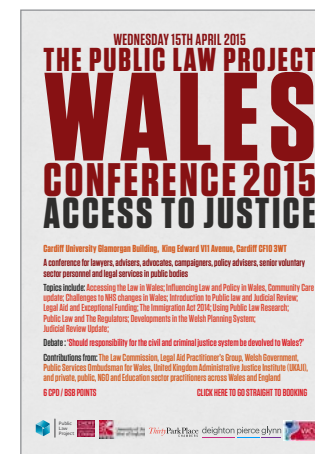
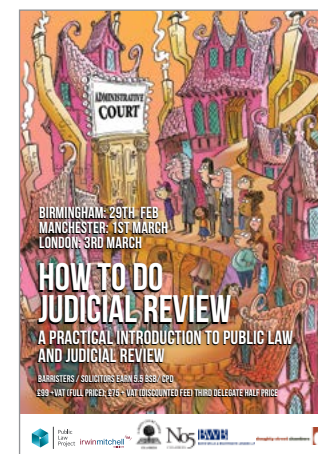
As well as running annual conferences in London, Cardiff and Manchester, PLP's training reacts to changes and developments in the justice system and wider society. 'Public Law and the Tribunals' in 2013 engaged with the expanding jurisdiction of the UK's tribunals, looking at public law, access to justice and comparative issues that arose during a significant transfer of cases into new jurisdictions, at the same time as many appealing to tribunals had publicly funded representation withdrawn. Some of our conferences answer questions such as '...what remedies could be used beyond those available in conventional public law?' (Private Law for Public Law Practitioners' conference). Our 'By Public Demand! Inquiries, Investigations and the Law' event became the first forum to comparatively discuss rights to investigation, statutory inquiries and independent reviews and the potential these have to hold the state to account.

“I have attended this event for the last five years. Each time it is ... helping me step away from the subjectivity of my work and enabling me to focus on the fundamental principles of why I became and still am a solicitor.

Conference delegate - from feedback

Very brave choice of speakers. It's nice to hear a debate rather than people agreeing with each other.”

Conference delegate - from feedback



How to do Judicial Review

Over the last five years we have developed a single, iterative training day 'How to do Judicial Review', which in 2015/16 trained over 200 people nationally. This event, which is focused on training claimant lawyers and advisers to assist vulnerable clients, is now considered the gold standard in the field.

PLP also delivers training as part of its ECF project (see pages 4-7) aimed at improving the accessibility of the ECF scheme by increasing knowledge among advisers of how to apply for ECF.

How to do Judicial Review attendees



Overall conference and training attendees



Nicola Mackintosh QC (Hons), Eleanor Grey QC, Yogi Amin and Martin Chamberlain QC, on stage at PLP's 25th Anniversary Dinner.

Resources, guides & publications

PLP publishes guides and resources for advisers, lawyers and the general public. In 2013, with the commissioning of a new website, PLP began systematically publishing resources from its events and training programme and the library offers everything from audio of addresses to our conferences, to Power Point slides and conference papers.

In 2012 we received funding from Matrix Causes fund to produce a set of guides to public law: Introduction To Public Law; An Introduction To Judicial Review; How To Make An Effective Complaint To A Public Body; The Basics Of Tribunal Representation and How To Apply For Legal Aid Funding For Judicial Review.



“PLP’s online Resource Library is amazing. In my role as a housing and social security adviser, I have found the plain-language guides on public law and legal aid particularly helpful for advising clients unfamiliar with the legal system. Clients find it useful and reassuring to have access to information that they can apply to their own situations.”

Matt Ahluwalia, Benefits and Housing Caseworker, Zacchaeus 2000 Trust



You can access our guides, policy responses, and all resources at www.publiclawproject.org.uk/resources

Community



PLP would simply not be sustainable without the extended community of volunteers, friends, funders, sponsors, lawyers (often acting pro bono) and donors that support and contribute to our work.

Since 2012 PLP has increased the number of events to draw together our community, enabling volunteers and supporters to share experiences and enjoy themselves whilst helping raise money and awareness of the Public Law Project. PLP has held four fundraising dinners since 2011, culminating in a 'PLP Silver Jubilee Dinner' event in 2015. PLP always attends the LLST London Legal Walk and at the Royal Parks Half Marathon 2016 PLP's team of 50 runners raised over £21,000 (see inside back cover).

Volunteer programme

PLP offers volunteering opportunities to aspiring lawyers and advisers supporting events and fundraising, increasing PLP's capacities and providing volunteers with insights into the legal and organisational framework for public law advice in the UK. The majority of our volunteer alumni have gone on to careers as advisers, solicitors or to the Bar.

“I think that I'm leaving PLP with a much better idea and a deeper understanding of judicial review and public law issues. I also got to understand what managing and sustaining a charity/NGO involves and I have developed many skills, e.g. organisational, marketing-related, setting priorities, and most importantly I got to attend some of the fantastic events organised by PLP for free, out of which I have gained so much knowledge! Thank you!”

Georgiana Panteli, PLP volunteer and Bar Vocational student.

Awards

In recent years PLP's work has received recognition including the Guardian Charity of the Year Award (2012), The Halsbury's Rule of Law Award (2013), and the Legal Aid Lawyer of the Year (LALY) Outstanding Achievement Award in 2015. In the same year we were shortlisted for the Liberty Human Rights Lawyer of the Year Award.



Sir Henry Brooke, PLP staff and Steve Cragg QC, a PLP Trustee, on stage receiving the 2015 Legal Aid Lawyer of the Year (LALY) Outstanding Achievement award.



PLP's Strategic Review

Towards the end of 2016, we launched a review process to help shape PLP's strategy for the next 3-5 years. This began with an externally facilitated away day* at which PLP's Board and full staff team came together to consider PLP's vision, mission and organisational values, and to start the process of analysis of the ever-changing public law landscape. We also engaged in a wide ranging stakeholder consultation exercise, seeking the thoughts and input of a broad range of conference delegates, advice agencies, clients, funders, other charities and public bodies including those who had been defendants in actions brought by PLP lawyers.

We asked delegates at our annual conference 'What three words would you use to describe PLP?'

Great.	Integrity, valued.	Impressive, relevant, courageous.
Inspiring, brilliant, essential.	Innovative, skilled, pragmatic.	Experienced, well-respected, well known.
Risk-taking, necessary.	Fascinating, well-organised, informative.	Important (as) ever.
Independent, fearless, strategic.	Leaders.	Campaigning, thorough, vigorous.
Passionate, effective, useful.	Brilliant, amazing.	Important (in political climate), grounded (in important principles), flexible (to new challenges).
Principled, powerful, just.	Fantastic.	Dedicated, fabulous.
Force for good.	Bold.	Insight, professional.
Determined, fair.	Excellent leaders.	
Dynamic, vital, active.	Reputable.	
Cutting-edge, committed.	Small but effective.	
	Informative.	

The strategic review exercise provided rich material which has shaped and informed every decision. Amongst the outcomes are a clarified mission, identified and articulated key organisational values, and the proposal that PLP's Board now adopts three broad objectives for 2017-2021, identified by careful reference to the external context in which we are operating and each underpinned by a number of priority areas.

**Many thanks to Caroline Copeman of Cass Business School/Centre for Charity Effectiveness for facilitating the away day, to 39 Essex Chambers who kindly provided wonderful meeting facilities, and to all those who so generously gave us their time.*

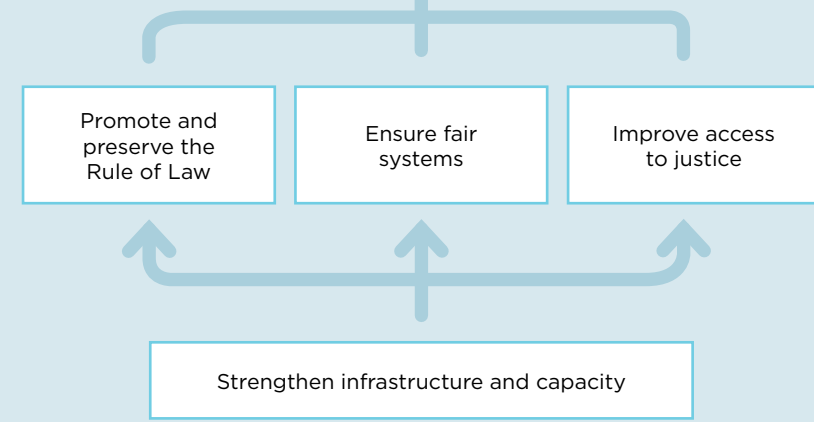
Our Vision

We seek a world in which individual rights are respected and public bodies act fairly and lawfully

Our Mission will achieve our Vision

We improve public decision-making and we facilitate access to justice

Our Strategic Priorities will deliver our Mission



Our Values underpin all our work

Equality Integrity Expertise Teamwork

Our Priorities

- 1 Promoting and safeguarding the Rule of Law during a period of significant constitutional change.
 - 2 Working to ensure fair and proper systems for the exercise of public powers and duties, whether by state or private actors; and
 - 3 Improving practical access to public law remedies, including by seeking to ensure that justice reform is evidence led and by increasing knowledge of public law.
- These three external facing priorities are underpinned by a fourth inward-facing objective...**
- 4 Continuing to strengthen infrastructure and capacity in order to improve our effectiveness as an organisation.

Staff



Sarah Clarke Solicitor (not pictured)

PLP's Trustees



Left to right: Bryan Nott, Ben Jaffey, James Darbyshire, Fiona McGhie, Ruthann Hughes, Angela Hogan, Savita Narain, Melanie Carter, Jason Housden & Steve Cragg QC (not pictured).

Melanie Carter is Head of Public & Regulatory Law at Bates, Wells & Braithwaite.

Stephen Cragg QC is a barrister at Monckton Chambers, specialising in public law especially in the criminal justice system and social welfare areas.

James Darbyshire is the Head of Legal and Recoveries at the Financial Services Compensation Scheme (FSCS).

Angela Hogan heads the legal service at the University of Bedfordshire and is a Director of its trading body, Bedfordshire Enterprises.

Jason Housden is Senior Practice Manager at Matrix Chambers.

Ruthann Hughes is a consultant at the civil society strategy consulting firm Firetail.

Ben Jaffey QC is a barrister at Blackstone Chambers in London and Chair of PLP's board.

Fiona McGhie is a solicitor at Irwin Mitchell's Bristol office.

Savita Narain is Deputy Director of AVA (Against Violence and Abuse).

Bryan Nott is Director of Personal Legal Services at Simpson Millar LLP.

Photo credits

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Photos pages 8, 17, 20, 22 and 23 - Ade Lukes
Mr Miah, page 4 - Express and Star

Supporters & funders

PLP would like to thank all the organisations, including legal practices, barristers chambers and voluntary organisations which have supported, sponsored or hosted PLP.

We do not have space to name all individual donors but this number has increased substantially over the last five years.



Thank you!

30 Park Place Chambers	Garden Court North Chambers	The Access to Justice Foundation
39 Essex Chambers	Guildhall Chambers	The Baring Foundation
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Garden Court Chambers	The AB Charitable Trust	

PLP has a contract to supply legal services with the Legal Aid Agency.

We seek a world in which individual rights are respected and public bodies act fairly and lawfully.

We improve public decision-making and we facilitate access to justice.

Our priorities are to:

Promote and preserve the Rule of Law

Ensure fair systems

Improve access to justice



Team PLP, Royal Parks Half Marathon 2016

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