



WARWICK LAW IN THE COMMUNITY

Annual Report 2023

About Warwick LinC

Warwick Law in the Community (LinC) is an initiative launched in September 2019 with a strong commitment to making a positive impact in the community at the local, national, and international levels. Here are some key aspects of what LinC aims to achieve

1. **Clinical Education and Research:** LinC focuses on providing innovative clinical education and research opportunities. This approach allows undergraduate and postgraduate law students to gain practical experience while also contributing to the advancement of social justice.
2. **Collaboration with Organisations:** LinC collaborates with various organisations to create opportunities for students. This collaboration can take various forms, including traditional legal advice and practice, but it goes beyond these conventional roles to expose students to alternative ways of approaching law. This may include activities such as writing, research, community organising, and public legal education.
3. **Engaged and Impactful Research:** LinC is dedicated to developing and producing research that actively engages with and makes an impact on social justice issues. This research is aimed at supporting community-led efforts and employs critical and participatory methods. It seeks to bridge the gap between academic research and real-world activism and legal practice.
4. **Collaboration and Partnerships:** LinC strives to foster collaboration between academics, legal practitioners, and activists. By bringing together these different perspectives and areas of expertise, it can create a more holistic and effective approach to addressing social justice issues.
5. **Long-Term Relationships and Collaborative Projects:** LinC is committed to developing long-term relationships and collaborative projects with organisations that share its values. This emphasis on long-term collaboration allows for sustained efforts and impact in addressing social justice concerns.



Student Engagement

We've had an intake of 95 students in our LinC projects in the period 2022-23 with 23 students taking part in the Asylum and Immigration Law Clinic, 46 students getting involved in the Strategic Social Justice Clinic, and 5 students undertaking summer internships with our partner organisations.

93

Students
Volunteered in our
Clinics in 2022/23



In March 2023 a group of student volunteers visited St Basil's Lorna Esien Court accommodation to present the results of the SSJC Care Leaver's Toolkit to staff working with young people leaving care.

	2019/20	2020/21	2021/22	2022/23
Strategic Social Justice Clinic	29	52	36	46
Immigration & Asylum Clinic	15	12	15	24
PLE Module	15	19	12	23
Summer Internships	2	9	5	5

Strategic Social Justice Clinic

The Strategic Social Justice Clinic (SSJC) is a partnership between Central England Law Centre (CELC) and Warwick LinC. It uses public law and rights-based approaches to address systemic disadvantage and create change. Student volunteers, guided by solicitors Emma Austin and Carla Clark from the CELC and Dr Maggie O'Brien from Warwick University, worked on four projects this year, gaining legal experience and developing leadership and communication skills in the social justice sector.

Care Leaver's Rights Toolkit Project

During the CELC's Rights in Community (RIC) partnership with St Basils, concerns arose about support for care leavers. St. Basils works with homeless youth and care leavers. St Basils identified a clear knowledge gap in relation to care leavers, both amongst care leavers themselves who were often unaware of the duties the local authority held toward them, and amongst their front-line staff in terms of navigating this complex statutory framework.

What LinC Did

- Students interviewed staff St Basils staff and a CELC Health & Social Care Law specialist to understand care leavers' issues and the legal framework.
- Students researched legal provisions on care leaver's rights and created a draft toolkit on Google Forms for St Basils, featuring questions for care leavers and support for St Basils staff.
- Students were given the opportunity to present the draft toolkit to Central England Law Centre for feedback on how their work could be improved to ensure its utility for care leavers, practitioners and frontline workers

Project Results

We devised a project which would first research care leaver entitlements and then devised a tool to assist support workers and young people to navigate those rights.

This tool was used to raise awareness and consciousness of those rights within the voluntary sector. It contributed to increasing the capacity of frontline workers to provide advice and support to a particularly vulnerable group.



Care Leaver's Local Offer Project

In Term 2 the SSJC built on the work done during Term 1's project.

The project's first aim was to finalise the St Basils toolkit based on CELC feedback and present it to St Basils. Additionally, it sought to assess the local authority's 'Local Offer for Care Leavers' for its robustness, usage, and opportunities for improvement, with the goal of creating recommendations for constructive dialogue with the local authority regarding care leaver provision quality.



What LinC Did

- Students refined and finalised the Care Leavers Rights Toolkit for St Basils, comprising questions for care leavers and legal education for staff.
- Researched the legal framework related to Care Leaver Local Offers.
- Conducted desk-based research on the local authority's Care Leaver Local Offer and compared it with 12 other local authorities' offers.
- Created a table to document comparative research findings.
- Received training on drafting FOIA requests and submitted requests to local authorities for data on care leaver engagement with Local Offers.
- Prepared draft recommendations for the local authority based on research.
- Received presentation skills training and presented the toolkit to St Basil's staff, including a Q&A session and a tour of St Basil's accommodations.

Project Results

- Completed Toolkit which has been used by frontline workers to navigate complex statutory framework on care leaver's rights and provide vital support to care leavers
- Delivered PowerPoint presentation on the toolkit to St Basils.
- Created a table for local offer comparative research and developed draft recommendations for local authority on improving Care Leavers Local Offer.
- Obtained FOIA responses from local authorities on Care Leaver Local Offers.

CELC's Reflections on Project Impact

'The work completed by students as part of the two Care Leaver Projects was fantastic. The final toolkit presented to St Basils combined elements of PLE on the legal framework governing Local Authority duties to Care Leavers and systemic issue identification tools. St Basils has fed back to CELC that this toolkit is now used in initial interviews with new Care Leavers referred to the service and is, thereafter, revisited regularly to aid staff in providing ongoing support to Care Leavers. The toolkit has enabled St Basils managers to identify issues of concern and, crucially, has given them more confidence to raise these with the Local Authority in service liaison meetings.'

Emma Austin, Solicitor, CELC

Student Finance Legal Briefing Project



The Student Finance Legal Briefing Project stemmed from CELC and Kids in Need of Defence's (KIND) work advising young migrants on their access to UK student finance. The long residence criteria, which determine eligibility, have been a point of concern. The project aimed to research and create a briefing note for CELC's Public Law Team, explaining how the criteria operate and suggesting areas for potential litigation.

What LinC Did

- Students researched student finance legislation, guidance, and case law.
- Reviewed We Belong's report on barriers to student finance access.
- Drafted FOIA requests to Student Finance England for quantitative data.
- Created a Briefing Note for CELC's Public Law Team.
- Received presentation skills training and presented the Briefing Note to CELC staff, followed by a Q&A session.

Project Results

- Briefing Note for CELC on student finance.
- PowerPoint presentations on Briefing Note, delivered to CELC.
- FOIA responses from Student Finance England.

CELC's Reflections on Project Impact

'The briefing note is really impressive.' – **Kasper Meidell, Caseworker, Public Law Team, CELC.**

'Since the project concluded we have shared the briefing note with all staff in CELC's Public Law and Immigration Teams. This has been used as a key point of reference when cases concerning eligibility for student finance have arisen.' – **Emma Austin, Solicitor, CELC**



Pre-Action Protocol (Housing Allocations Decisions) Project

Central England Law Centre deals with housing law, often helping clients facing delays in reviewing their priority status for social housing. The project's aim was to establish a legal basis for challenging Coventry City Council's delays in assessing change of circumstance (CoC) requests, referencing statutory regulations and the Council's Allocation Schedule. The project aimed to draft a pre-action protocol letter for use by the CELC and a briefing note for staff.



What LinC Did:

- Students researched the judicial review process, the legal framework and allocations policy of housing law and local authority guidance.
- Drafted a briefing note and pre-action protocol letter for use by the CELC
- Staged a mock debate regarding the validity of judicial review
- Received training and feedback on the presentation for CELC and partners and critiqued resources produced.

Project Results:

- Students produced a pre-action protocol letter and briefing note for CELC staff.
- Presented to CELC the results of research and outlined resources for use by CELC staff.
- Formed basis of a further housing project for SSJC in 23/24



CELC's Reflections on Project Impact

'Both the briefing note and pre-action protocol letter produced by students are excellent resources. These have got us thinking about potential public law grounds we could be raising in our clients' cases that we hadn't considered before'

Hugh Wilkinson, Head of Housing Team, CELC

'I've used arguments from SSJC project work to help me support clients whose change of circumstance applications were taking a long time to process. The council has then made a decision quickly. I've not needed to send the letter yet, as I've found making points from the letter to the council informally has helped sort out the problem.'

Holly Andrews, Client Support Worker, CELC

'The work the students did has given me lots of ideas about conversations CELC can be having with the council, in our capacity as a critical friend, to persuade the council to review its processes to ensure these work better for those who are subject to them.'

Emma Bates, Director of Positive Action on Poverty and Partnerships, CELC

Immigration & Asylum Clinic

For more than ten years, students at Warwick Law School have been providing support to the Immigration and Asylum Clinic at CELC. Under the supervision of the Immigration and Asylum team, led by Robert Bircumshaw, the clinic has flourished. Students engage in various aspects of the immigration and asylum procedures, from research and client meetings to drafting legal aid representations and representing individuals and families in appeals and judicial review applications. Volunteers especially value the hands-on experience gained through their placements.



“We undertook a variety of tasks, including filling Exceptional Case Funding applications and helping with applications for Biometric Residency Permits. I enjoyed conducting legal research and creating briefing documents for the cases the clinic was working on and the diversity of tasks ensured that I could develop a range of skills.

I also appreciated the fact that we could attend meetings with clients. One of the main reasons I wanted to join the clinic was to play my part in helping people to navigate the immigration and asylum system. Attending meetings with clients allowed me to recognise that my work could still directly impact those in need, which made me more invested in my work at the clinic.

My time at the clinic has not only allowed me to confirm my interest in working in the human rights and immigration field in my professional life, but it has also made me a more desirable candidate for future employers. I ended up securing a vacation scheme at a law firm that works on human rights and immigration cases and was told how my experience at the CELC made me stand out. Not only did my time at CELC demonstrate my interest and commitment to working in human rights law, but it also outlined how I had already developed the skills necessary to complete the vacation scheme. Indeed, many of the tasks we completed at the clinic were similar to my work during my vacation scheme.

Being able to work from the office was an excellent opportunity to gain insight into the day-to-day work of solicitors and paralegals. It allowed me to confirm that this would be my ideal career path. I also had the opportunity to discuss people’s professional journeys and learn more about the potential paths I might take following graduation.”

David, a Warwick Law student and Immigration and Asylum Clinic volunteer

Summer Internships

LinC offered 5 student internships with partner organisation during summer 2023.

CELC Strategic Social Justice Clinic Internship - Worked with CELC to map and identify upcoming social welfare policy influencing opportunities. Conducted background research and data gathering for a draft briefing note for the Attorney General/Shadow Attorney General setting out CELC's recommendations for changes to provision of social welfare civil Legal Aid.

CELC Rights in the Community Internship - Researched the legal framework for the Parliamentary and Health Service Ombudsman's healthcare complaint investigation duties, examined their policies and decisions on investigations, investigated cases where complaints were refused, and provided a summary to brief CELC colleagues on the Ombudsman's compliance with their legal duties.

Legal Action Group Internship - Assisted in the production of the Legal Action Group's publications and event organising. Assisted in a wide variety of tasks which allowed the intern to experience the breadth of work carried out by the Legal Action Group.

Coventry Independent Advice Service Internship - Our student intern worked with the CIAS team that ran the Social Supermarket in Foleshill, Coventry. They advised on a variety and support in a wide range of matters including assisting clients with benefits checks, supporting accessing services online and signposting to other help. The intern also helped people claiming Personal Independence Payments. They also assisted the CIAS in administrative tasks.

Law for Life: Legal Information, Research and Evaluation Internship - Assisted in various research tasks such as carrying out literature reviews, updating databases and recording and logging data and other findings. Our intern also worked on the Advicenow website and created social media posts to engage and excite followers.



Reflections on a LinC Summer Internship

Phoebe was the LinC intern on our Law for Life internship. She reflects on her time with them.

After studying the Public Legal Education module in my final year at university, I grew a deep interest in the barriers in accessing justice and the organisations involved in facilitating greater access to justice. This is why I was elated to discover the internship opportunity by Law for Life, a leading legal charity, organized in conjunction with the University of Warwick. Throughout this work experience, I was involved in various tasks from the information team, research team and education team which helped me to develop a broad range of skills.

While working with the information team, I liaised with various university law clinics, members of parliament and local Citizens Advice Bureaus to advise them on Law for Life's current offerings and how they can be used to advise people in need. I found this task particularly interesting as I was able to draw on my understanding gained from studying the PLE module. I realized that as a result of the reduction in legal aid available to the public, there was a high demand for affordable advice. This influenced my research and communication with the various stakeholders to ensure that they were receiving information that was relevant to their legal needs.

Additionally, I assisted the research team in collating data to identify the number of people in the UK on benefits and using resources by the Department of Work and Pensions and how best the organization could support them with legal advice. Although this task was initially challenging I was supported throughout with frequent training calls and sessions.

Furthermore, I had the opportunity to expand my networking during this internship as I had regular catchup calls with the team which assisted me in my career and personal development.

During my final year of university, I often wondered about the career avenues in the legal sector aside from the traditional role of barristers and solicitors I had heard about. I believe this internship opened my eyes to the plethora of career opportunities and ways to help people in the legal sector. This was also a fantastic opportunity to gain insight into the operation of legal charities as well as the different services Law for Life offered to people seeking legal advice. I would recommend that anyone in university undertake this internship as it is a great opportunity to gain insight to different areas of the law while developing many skills.



Public Legal Education - 2023/2024

During the 2023/2024 academic year, 24 students worked across six different placements and projects

Carer's Rights Film with Grapevine and Central England Law Centre

Under the Care Act 2014, carers of adults with eligible needs are entitled to have their own needs assessed, in particular to ascertain whether they are 'willing and able' to continue to provide care, the impact of providing care on their own well-being, the outcomes they wish to achieve in their own day-to-day life and whether they want to participate in education, training, or recreation. Additionally, consideration of the extent carers are 'willing and able' to provide care (or otherwise) to loved ones is key to lawful support planning for a disabled adults; yet this consideration is poorly understood and is frequently overlooked. Awareness of these rights is worryingly low. In response, students created three short videos on carers' needs assessments including how to prepare for the assessment, what to expect during the assessment, and how to challenge an assessment.



Precarious Work Film with Coventry Independent Advice Service

People who are in casualised and precarious employment situations - for example with companies like Deliveroo or Uber - face a range of issues owing to the nature of this work and the low and often unpredictable income levels associated with it. These include understanding their employment status and any rights they may have, as well as knock on effects of changing income on their entitlement to universal credit and other means-tested benefits, and tax issues.

Universal Credit

What is Universal Credit

- Monthly payment from the Government to top up what you earn
- Also available for self-employed

You may be entitled to Universal Credit, if you:



Check Your Eligibility

- Government benefits checker
- Benefits Calculator



You may need to re-claim Universal Credit if your circumstances change

- Temporary increases in monthly income (short-term work)
- Two pay days in one assessment period.

You may need to log into your online account and make a re-claim to avoid losing benefits.

The aim of this project was to develop a better understanding of the problems facing this group and select one or two priority issues to try to address through the creation and dissemination of an information resource. Students worked toward the creation of an accessible and engaging film dealing with these issues.

The video can be viewed [here](#).

Universal Credit Journal Resource – Coventry Independent Advice Service

Universal Credit is a benefit that was introduced to replace Job Seeker's Allowance, Employment and Support Allowance, Income Support, Child Tax Credits, Working Tax Credits and Housing Benefit. Universal Credit claimants have a Universal Credit account where they can update their personal circumstances or interact with their work coach. The Universal Credit Journal is an area within the UC account where UC claimants can leave messages for their work coach. If claimants do not keep their journal up to date, they may face sanctions. Individuals with low levels of digital literacy, lack of access to technology are especially vulnerable to being sanctioned. This is compounded by other factors such as age and homelessness. Students created a leaflet for Universal Credit claimants providing a step-by-step guide on navigating the Universal Credit journal.

Law for Life Placement

Two students undertook a Public Legal Education placement at Law for Life: The Foundation for Public Legal Education. They helped to research and develop a public legal education programme on the cost of living crisis and the private rented sector. The placement involved understanding the main issues faced by private tenants in the context of the cost-of-living crisis, identifying which groups are most heavily affected, and researching organisations which work with these groups to attend the education programmes.

Digital Story-telling Project with Warwick School of Law, Law for Life and Central England Law Centre

Warwick Law School, Law for Life and the Central England Law Centre were conducting a qualitative legal needs study in Coventry focused on the experiences of marginalised groups and working with local 'trusted intermediaries' like foodbanks and social supermarkets, social housing providers, and advocacy and support organisations. The main part of the research involved interviews with 35 individuals who have struggled to deal with a law-related issue since the start of the pandemic. In addition to the research itself, they produced a series of podcasts where the research participants got to tell their story in their own way. We wanted to create engaging, shareable, digital content with a selection of the participants that help our audience understand the increase in unmet legal needs and barriers in access to justice for already-marginalised groups in the wake of the Covid-19 pandemic. We wanted to use this content to help shift the conversation about what legal need is and to shine a light on the experiences of, and impact on, marginalised groups' i.e. unmet legal need contributes to cycles of social disadvantage and exclusion. Students worked with the research team to conceptualise the podcast, facilitate workshops and record sessions with participants.

Employment Law Resource for International Students – Warwick SU Advice Centre

Students created 'TikTok' style videos aimed at international students on their employment rights. The videos addressed employment law rights, such as obtaining part-time work as an international student, and obtaining a skilled worker or graduate visa following graduation.



Warwick Law in the Community Research Update

Law for Life's CEO Dr Lisa Wintersteiger is, in partnership with Dr Tara Mulqueen of Warwick Law School and Claire Stern of Central England Law Centre, undertaking research into the experiences of marginalised groups in dealing with law-related issues in Coventry in the wake of the pandemic and as the cost-of-living emergency continues. The study's preliminary findings shed light on emerging needs, the barriers to accessing justice, the impact of increased reliance on digital technology, and the role of public legal education (PLE) in improving access to justice for marginalised groups.

So far, the research has focussed on the insight provided by 'trusted intermediaries', workers in frontline organisations who work directly with the communities concerned in the study. Interviews with the organisations, as well as background data collection, and a local stakeholder workshop, have provided valuable insights into the experiences of marginalised groups. The researchers have [published a briefing on the research findings](#).



“What our volunteers say

“To anyone interested in social justice, I would strongly recommend volunteering”

“My time volunteering was extremely insightful and has opened doors which I had not previously considered”

“Everyone is really lovely...Very knowledgeable and helpful”

