

North Kensington Law Centre

Background Information

North Kensington Law Centre was established in July 1970 to provide a free specialist legal service to meet the legal advice needs of local people who were disadvantaged through poverty or access to the law.

Over the years the service has changed considerably and the Law Centre currently has a Specialist Help Quality Mark from the Legal Services Commission (LSC) to provide legal advice and assistance in education, employment, housing, immigration and welfare benefits.

We are a member of the national Law Centres Federation and part of the network of advice centres operating in Kensington and Chelsea that includes the Moroccan Information and Advice Centre, Nucleus Legal Advice Centre, Worlds End Neighbourhood Advice Centre, Staying Put, Chelsea CAB and Kensington CAB. It is also part of the local Community Legal Service Partnership in Kensington and Chelsea which is intended to be a network of solicitors from private practice and advice agencies and local authority officers which meet to with the LSC and other funders to ensure that the legal needs of people in Kensington and Chelsea are addressed.

The Law Centre is a registered charity and a company limited by guarantee. It is controlled by a voluntary Management Committee (MC) which has corporate and legal responsibility for all activities and functions of the organization. The Management Committee discharges its functions through the following mechanisms:

- The main MC meets on the third Monday of every month during the year
- A staffing sub-committee meets at least quarterly and oversees all staffing and employment matters affecting the organization
- A finance sub-committee meets at least quarterly and oversees the financial control and management of the organization and approves the annual budget
- An Annual General Meeting is held in the third quarter of each financial year
- The organization holds an annual review day every year for staff and MC members

The organization employs eight full-time and six part-time staff to carry out activities on behalf of the Management Committee. Below is a list of the main positions and responsibilities:

Director

The Director is responsible to the Management Committee for the operational management of the organization.

Senior Solicitors

There are two senior solicitors are accountable to the director and to the management committee for the quality and output of the professional work of the Law Centre. This includes responsibility for:

- overseeing the supervision of legal advice and casework provided by caseworkers
- ensuring compliance with Solicitors' Act and professional conduct rules including solicitor's account rules and any other requirements
- maintaining professional indemnity insurance

Caseworkers

There are currently five full-time and two part-time solicitor/caseworkers who are accountable to the senior solicitors and who provide legal advice and assistance in education, employment, housing, immigration and welfare benefits.

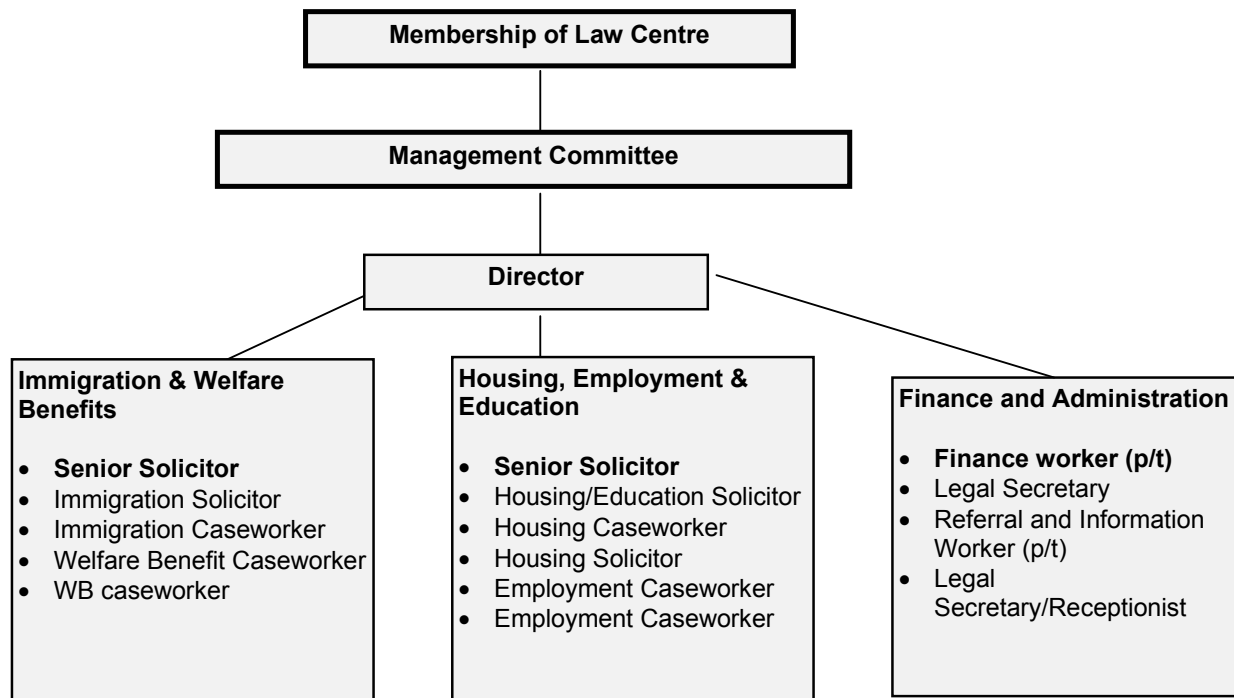
Finance and Administration

The Finance Worker is accountable to the director and to the Treasurer and Finance sub-committee for the financial control and management of the Law Centre. Following a recent review of our administration the new changes will include the following:

- Receptionist/Administrator
- Receptionist/Information Worker part time (until July 2004)
- Legal Secretary

Organisational diagram

The organisational diagram below summaries the structure of the Centre:



The Law Centre's work centres primarily on legal advice, advocacy and representation before tribunals and courts. We have secured several hundred thousand pounds for clients in recent years. We have prevented homelessness and stopped evictions and helped tenants deal with disrepair issues and obtain compensation. We have advised employees on their rights at work and fight discrimination and assisted and represented those with immigration and asylum difficulties.

Our Evening Advice Session

We offer an advice service in conjunction with city firm Dechert on Wednesday evenings (currently every fortnight) for people who want to bring or defend small claims proceedings in the county court. You must book an appointment – we cannot see people who just turn up.

The evening session will usually run between 18.00-20.00 hours.

We can offer advice in the following areas:

- Consumer-related problems (i.e. defective goods, paying for services which are not delivered)
- Small claims up to £5,000
- Employment law

- Small business advice
- Media and entertainment law
- Rent deposit disputes

We offer assistance to small community groups who require help with the following:

- Constitutions
- Employment problems
- Contract law

In the evening you will be seen by a volunteer at the Law Centre. All the volunteers are employed as solicitors or trainee solicitors at commercial law firm Dechert and offer their services free to the Law Centre for the evening advice sessions.