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## Background Information about MiCLU

MiCLU was formally established in 2012 with legacy funding awarded by the Diana, Princess of Wales Memorial Fund (DPWMF). We carry out our work through an integrated work programme, including a mix of:

* Direct legal representation and support for children and young people. We represent children fleeing war, conflict, abuse and persecution, trafficked into the UK for exploitation and slavery and undocumented young people effectively “invisible” in terms of civil and legal status because of UK immigration laws.
* Strategic litigation (to bring legal change with wider impact and benefit for all young people).
* Policy and influencing work.
* Consultancy (supporting the work of statutory and non-statutory agencies to design and develop child rights based services, training and evaluation).
* Legal education work (training legal and non-legal professionals nationally on the needs, rights and entitlements of young people seeking international protection or whose lives are impacted by immigration laws) and creating child-friend information for children in migration.
* Public legal education work – the lives of young people are governed by an array of laws and policies. We design legal education courses with young people for young people and for the important people in their lives.

The Breaking the Chains Project

Breaking the Chains is a partnership project run by the Migrant and Refugee Children’s Legal Unit (MiCLU) at Islington Law Centre and Shpresa Programme, a registered charity and refugee community group working with the Albanian speaking community in London. The pilot phase is funded by the Paul Hamlyn Foundation, for 3 years from March 2019. Funding for expansion of the project into Phase 2 has been provided by The Big Lottery Reaching Communities fund from October 2020 for 4 years.

The overall objective of the project is to improve the legal representation of, and outcomes for, Albanian speaking children and young people in the UK asylum system. The project aims to:

* Provide high quality legal advice and representation to Albanian speaking children and young people
* Develop and deliver the ‘Immigration Champions’ training programme (to increase engagement from hard-to-reach children and young people, ensure their voices inform the development and implementation of the Breaking the Chains project, and enable peer-to-peer dissemination of learning)
* Develop and deliver a 3-module training programme on the asylum system to Albanian speaking children and young people accessing Shpresa
* Provide advice sessions to children and young people at Shpresa concerned about their asylum claims
* Establish a tailored training and support programme for Shpresa staff on asylum-related legal issues
* Develop child/youth-friendly materials
* Share learning from the project via public events

The Evaluation Report for Year 1 of the Paul Hamlyn Foundation funded work can be found [here](https://miclu.org/btcy1).

**About The Role**

This role has arisen due to the success of our Breaking the Chains (“BTC”) project and new funding for expansion.

The project co-ordinator role is intended to be a non-legal position contributing to the direction, facilitation and support of the project. The post holder will be expected to work closely with project staff at MiCLU and Shpresa programme and most particularly with the young people accessing our services. Strong youth engagement skills and the ability to communicate directly with Albanian-speaking young people, and English speaking lawyers is essential for the role. The post-holder will facilitate sessions with young people and support them to ensure that their voices shape the project. Once face-to-face provision is able to start again, this is likely to be at youth club venues in London, and some sessions will take place in the evening. An ability to deliver evening work is therefore important for the role.

The post holder will work closely with those young people involved in the BTC Immigration Champions programme. This is a cornerstone of the BTC project, and is crucial to embedding the voice of children and young people within the service. MiCLU is keen that our policy and advocacy work amplifies the voice of the child in everything that we do. Work with the Immigration Champions has therefore been essential to our understanding of the key issues faced by asylum-seeking children and young people from Albania. It has also offered us many more opportunities to raise awareness and train on issues relating to child-centred representation, as audiences are keen to hear from those with lived experience. The Immigration Champions also provide key evidence and direction to work with academic partners, identify gaps in the evidence that those without lived experience may miss, and ensure that such resources are targeted where they are most needed.

The Immigration Champions are also essential to the delivery of peer-to-peer training, reinforcing the training delivered, and ensuring that the hardest to reach and most vulnerable children and young people are made aware of our service.

The post-holder will therefore provide a key role in facilitating and supporting legal practitioners, Shpresa staff and the Immigration Champions in their work.

## Background Information about Islington Law Centre

Islington Law Centre was founded in 1972. We offer high quality rights based advice, assistance and legal representation to people living, working or studying in the London Borough of Islington and beyond. We provide legal advice services free and do not charge individual clients for our services.

Islington Law Centre is a full member of the Law Centres Network (LCN) and participates fully in joint initiatives and policy development in partnership with other Law Centres.

The Law Centre currently employs 37 people and is based in offices near the Angel, in the south of the London Borough of Islington.

We receive funding from the local authority, the Legal Aid Agency (with whom we have contracts to provide publicly funded Legal Aid), City of London law firms, Charitable Trusts, Foundations and independent donations.

We are a Registered Charity and a Company Limited by Guarantee. Our turnover is in the region of £1.5 million per annum.

## Services Provided

The Law Centre holds the Law Society’s Lexcel Quality Mark, which is subjected to an annual independent audit process. The Law Centre is contracted to provide publicly funded legal advice and representation by the Legal Aid Agency in the following areas of law; Immigration & Asylum, Housing & Debt, and Public Law, and to manage the Duty Desk Scheme at Clerkenwell and Shoreditch County Court.

In addition to providing publicly funded work, we offer services funded by other sources in: Debt, Education, Housing, Immigration and Asylum, Public Law and Welfare Benefits. We have 3 specialist projects – the Migrants’ Law Project; the Migrant and Refugee Children’s Legal Unit; and StreetLegal – a young people’s homelessness project.

The Law Centre runs a telephone advice service in addition to having an on-going caseload of around 1,400 cases. We are open to the public Monday to Friday from 10am - 1pm and 2pm to 4pm for general enquiries, and from 6.30 pm to 9.30pm Monday to Wednesday for our pro bono evening clinics. The Law Centre is open for appointments and client interviews Monday to Friday from 9am – 6pm.

We have an extensive range of outreach services, offering 18 sessions a week, at venues that include community organisations, Islington Council’s housing offices, and Help on Your Doorstep, a local outreach charity.

The Law Centre has good links with a number of London City law firms, and operates evening advice sessions for people with consumer and small claims issues, which are staffed by volunteer solicitors from partner firms. These sessions are held on Monday, Tuesday and Wednesday evenings.

We offer telephone advice support to local community organisations, and work closely with a range of other agencies and unfunded groups.

The Law Centre is a founding member of Islington Advice Alliance, and has close working links with Islington People’s Rights, Citizens Advice Service, and Help on Your Doorstep.

## Staff Structure and Volunteers

The Law Centre is run by a Senior Management Team: Director Stuart Hearne, Deputy Director Matt Brown; Finance Manager Pamela Saunders and the Office Manager role which will be recruited to in the near future.

The Law Centre staff is currently comprised of 18 qualified solicitors or barristers, the majority of whom are practising solicitors with many years PQE. We have 10 specialist caseworkers, Reception and Referral staff and project support staff.

We have at least one Supervisor for all areas of law practised with the majority of areas having two in order to provide continuity during periods of holiday or absence.

We are extremely grateful for the assistance of a large number of volunteers, who assist with a variety of tasks within the Law Centre.

## Board of Trustees

The Board of Trustees currently has 9 members, some of whom have been on the Board for a number of years, and some who are fairly new to this role. The Board includes lawyers with an interest in the work of the Law Centre, and other members with relevant skills and experience.

The SMT is responsible for liaising with the Board and meetings are held approximately every 8 weeks, during the evening.

The Board provides oversight and governance of the Law Centre, and members hold formal responsibility as Directors of the Company and as Trustees of the Charity.

## Plans for the Future

We currently receive a grant under Islington Council’s Strategic Advice Partners programme and this is likely to be subject to renewal in mid-2020. We have a good relationship with the Council are confident there remains an appetite to fund quality legal casework. We currently operate legal aid contracts in housing, immigration and asylum and public law.

The Law Centre has recruited a new senior team and has strengthened our financial position. The Law Centre has a team of very experienced practitioners across all areas and we have a stable financial position. We have a wide range of very supportive funders and we are in a strong position to face the challenges ahead.

We have developed innovative and creative solutions to the emerging needs of clients and have a number of priorities for the future which include:

* Continuing to improve our internal governance and management functions
* Continuing to undertake strategic litigation and policy and advocacy work on behalf of our client groups
* Updating and improving our Mission, Objectives and Values
* Improving our infrastructure, particularly ICT as part of the joint initiative by the Law Centres Network, to ensure that we can maintain the quality of our work and strengthen our relationships with funders, donors and supporters
* Increasing our unrestricted income, so that we can build our reserves and adapt in a changing funding climate
* Securing funding to maximise the capacity of our casework teams as we are experiencing very high demand for our services
* Building our joint work with other organisations to maximise the impact of our work.