

Strategic Plan 2026 -29

This strategy outlines our aims for 2026 - 2029: to deliver high-quality and effective legal services and support, ensure long-term sustainability, engage meaningfully with our communities, champion social and economic justice through evidence, advocacy and the services we provide, and to adapt the ways in which we deliver our services and strengthen our governance.

It also recognises the serious challenges we face, including disruption to and rates of legal aid, and diminishing grants available for our work, increasing demand for our services, and pressures on recruitment.

But we are not standing still. We are investing in our people, our partnerships, our technology, and our voice. We are driven by a mission to fight injustice, inequality, and poverty, and to assist those in our communities to do so and we are ready to meet the future with determination and ambition.

We owe a huge debt of gratitude to all our many funders, partners and corporate and individual sponsors of our work as well as to our staff and volunteers. There is, however, much more to be done. This is our roadmap to unlocking justice for all. We invite them all and our communities to join us in shaping the next chapter.

Introduction

We are, at our core, a social, economic and welfare justice charity. We use the law to lift families and individuals out of crisis and in doing so give them opportunities for more stable and better lives in the future.

In 2024–25, we celebrated our 50th anniversary. This milestone gave us a chance to celebrate, reflect, and adapt for the future, for the benefit of our clients, staff, and wider communities.

Although the world has changed in the last half-century, the nature of the crises our clients face has remained stubbornly familiar:

- People living in disrepair and poor housing conditions.
- People burdened with rising rent arrears and mounting debts.
- Workers treated unfairly and unlawfully.
- Immigrants and migrants facing a persistently hostile environment.
- People navigating a complex welfare system to unlock their rightful entitlements.

In addition, factors such as, increased costs of living, lack of affordable and secure housing, lack of effective dispute resolution, and disparities in digital access which is now required to obtain many legal, economic and social services have all posed obstacles to gaining equality in access to justice.

We recognise that we help people at a time when they are vulnerable and that the problems which they face are often complex and can cut across multiple areas of law and of expertise.

Our model of community lawyering is built around the real-world experiences of those we serve. This means working alongside our communities, not just delivering legal services, but listening, understanding local realities, and building relationships to identify where, why and how there is

a need for social, economic and welfare justice in our communities and how best to collaborate with them to deliver our services and achieve it.

We achieve that primarily by offering our specialist advisory and advocacy casework services together with cross-collaboration between our teams and the wrap-around support required to ensure not only that our clients understand their legal rights and have quality access to justice but so our work can help assist them towards a more stable future.

From our core legal representation work in courts and tribunals, we have also developed a number of targeted projects to meet specific justice needs in our communities. However, we recognise that the demand for access to justice goes beyond what our staff and volunteers alone can meet. That is why we have for over 40 years collaborated with and developed a network of external volunteer lawyers to provide additional free legal advice services. This vital part of our work enables us to support thousands of people each year, who would otherwise be denied access to justice. This year we are celebrating the 40th anniversary of our first city-firm led advice clinic with Simmons and Simmons LLP.

In addition, our holistic approach to community lawyering goes beyond casework. It includes outreach, education, preventative work, partnership with community groups, and using our legal insight to inform wider advocacy and campaigning for social, economic and welfare justice to support long-term change. Through these other aspects of our work we are able to not only foster a better environment for our casework to have maximum impact and a long-lasting effect on our clients' futures but we can help more people gain greater access to social and economic justice in the future.

Who We Are, Our Mission and Values

We are a registered charity (1102433) and a company limited by guarantee (05018587). We have over 30 members of staff, supported by volunteers, a network of pro-bono lawyers and a trustee board. We operate across six London boroughs: Croydon, Merton, Wandsworth, Richmond, Kingston, and Sutton, with a wider catchment area.

Our services include:

- Legal aid and grant-funded casework in social, welfare law, covering housing, debt, immigration and economic justice (welfare rights)
- On-the-day legal advice at three London courts to prevent homelessness and improve housing conditions.
- Free legal advice clinics in partnership with volunteer lawyers, offering accessible guidance to the community in the areas of consumer, small claims, employment, family, housing, rent deposits, and personal injury.
- Economic justice involving crisis navigation and cost-of-living support to help individuals and families maximise their income and maintain stable housing.
- Community-driven campaigns and policy work that amplify client voices, build social justice networks, and empower communities to protect their social, economic and welfare legal rights through advocacy, education, and collaboration.

Our mission is to continue to increase access to justice and to grow the legal support we provide to our communities to:

- Fight social, economic and welfare injustice and inequality.
- Stand up and provide a voice for the most vulnerable and marginalised in our communities who would otherwise have no access to the law or legal remedies, stretching our geographical reach when needed.
- Help and empower people in our communities in understanding and enforcing their rights.
- Work with and within our communities campaigning for equality of access to social, economic and welfare justice.

Our values are:

- **Equal access to social, economic and welfare justice:** raising awareness of and enabling equal access to social, economic and welfare justice.
- **Dignity and respect for all:** treating everyone with whom we engage with dignity and respect.
- **Independence and community based :** being free to champion the rights of those who need our assistance to gain access to social, economic and welfare justice and to listen to what our local community needs from us.

Strategic Aims

1. Long Term Strategy

Our long term vision and goal is success in unlocking social, economic and welfare justice through:

- Being an established community voice for access to justice in London.
- Delivering high-quality advice and representation for those in most need in the communities we serve.
- Providing a one-stop-shop for our clients with our integrated advice and approach to casework: dealing with the underlying problems not just the symptoms of social, economic and welfare injustice.
- Supporting our staff to provide our services and maintaining a network of volunteers and volunteer lawyers so as to continue to extend our reach and champion the work which we do.
- Identifying, devising and promoting appropriate educational projects, policy and campaigns informed by and developed from our collaboration with the communities in which we work and cases to highlight how to and influence systems and policies that contribute to greater access to social, economic and welfare justice.
- Strengthening our relationships with existing funders, partners and sponsors and using data and professional external communications to demonstrate our impact to attract new funders, partners and sponsors.
- Becoming an organisation where lived experience alongside data and innovation is incorporated into our work, governance and influencing our future development.
- Preserving financial stability and using our resources responsibly.

2. Strategic Aims for 2026 -2029

Aim 1: To Continue to Provide High-Quality, Free or Low Cost Specialist Legal Advice and Advocacy in our Communities with Adjunct Advisory and Support Services

We will support and empower our local community, particularly the most vulnerable, through community lawyering. We will continue to deliver free, accessible, high-quality legal advice and representation and adjunct advice and support services to have maximum impact and ensure that our services are shaped by the demand for them and lived experiences of those we serve.

Aim 2: To Ensure Long-Term Sustainability

We will improve our long-term sustainability by diversifying our income, developing fundable services, and investing in our staff and volunteers. Alongside that we will develop a formal plan

for lived experience to have a greater influence on our governance, decision-making and future development.

Aim 3: To Engage with Our Communities

We will strengthen our presence in, and understanding of, the community we serve. This includes identifying how the community can more meaningfully shape our governance and strategy in future.

Aim 4 : To Champion Our Work and Campaign for Equality of Access to Social, Economic and Welfare Justice

We will make better use of data, case studies and other media to inform, influence and advocate for long-term change in access to social, economic and welfare justice. We will grow a strong base of supporters and champions to amplify our voice and impact.

3. Reflections on Last Year (2025-2026)

In the past year 2025 - 26 we assisted 5,104 individuals directly and triaged 3,663 additional enquiries. In 2024 - 25 we assisted 5,267 individuals directly and triaged 3,907 additional enquiries. This was achieved notwithstanding a number of challenges which we faced including disruption caused by the Legal Aid Agency data outage in April 2025, changed priorities of a number of previous grant funders and delays in getting funding renewed. The financial impact of those challenges required the trustees to take the difficult decision to downsize the number of paid staff within the organisation with a restructuring which affected all teams from the senior management through to casework and administrative teams and led to the closure of the employment team. Following this, we need to rebuild our financial resilience and ensure we have a strong base from which to build momentum in meeting our objectives and strategic aims going forward.

4. Strategic Aims This Year (2025-2026)

This year is about preserving financial stability and consolidating and investing in strategic growth to sustain and expand our impact notwithstanding the changes we have faced in the funding landscape by:

- Rebuilding financial resilience and increasing the level of surplus to our unrestricted funds.
- Retaining and developing the existing staff, including how we employ, remunerate and support them, and, where funding permits, growing to fill in the gaps in our teams.
- Harnessing our data and storytelling in order that we can continue to champion and campaign for our work, delivering a clear message about who we are, our mission, our values and the impact we have on access to social, economic and welfare justice within our communities.
- Reviewing our governance and management structures so we can more clearly demonstrate how our communities can meaningfully shape our services, governance and strategy in future.