

Legal Advice for Homeless Patients

Evaluation Findings

About the project

- Pathway commissioned
- Trust for London funding (£90k)
- Three year project
- Supported Pathway hospital teams in London

What were we trying to do?

- Give vulnerable homeless patients access to independent legal advice
- Embed legal support services within Pathway teams in London
- Design and adapt legal advice to deal with most common issues in each hospital
- Help Pathway teams build knowledge and understanding of relevant legislation

How did we do it?

- Identified most common legal concerns for patients
- Partnered with 3 legal advice providers with the expertise we needed
- Designed and set up local arrangements with hospital teams

Who worked where?

hodge jones & allen
solicitors



Who worked where?



consonant

formerly  migrants resource centre  Asylum Aid
Association for Participation



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 **pathway**
Healthcare for homeless people

Who worked where?



What assistance did they provide?

- ‘Second tier’ advisory support (via dedicated email & phone lines)
- Attendance at team meetings/MDTs
- Staff training sessions & briefing notes
- Occasional case work

Some key headlines

- 350+ pieces of advice given to teams
- In-depth advocacy for 20 patients
- Took on 25 cases
- Attended 40+ team meetings
- Numerous presentations & conference workshops
- Regular briefing notes & updates provided to teams on key legislation & case law

Common concerns

???

Some common themes

- Understanding & resolving immigration status issues
- Lack of documentation – and getting hold of it!
- Home Office - unacceptable delays/unsatisfactory responses
- Inappropriate gate keeping
- Challenging local authority decisions
- Advice on housing eligibility
- Barriers to communication

Some common themes

- Section 21 notices
- Intentionality
- NRPF
- Immigration status
- HRA interpretation/implementation
- Trafficking in relation to homelessness/housing
- Fitness for habitation
- Safety considerations e.g. returning to areas with gangs

What have we learned?

- Top message = extremely valuable to patients
- Raised confidence of Pathway teams = they know what they do & don't know...
- ... transformed how Pathway teams approach and deal with legal matters arising for patients.
- Took time to build up referrals...
- ...but now over-subscribed

What have we learned?

- Space to deal with complexity
- Possible to support patients beyond their hospital admission
- Complexity of 'interlocking problems' requires advice on combination of housing, immigration and social care/welfare

What have we learned?

- Open to trying different modes of communication/delivery approaches to suit local need
- Universal appreciation of team meetings, training and MDTs
- Adapting ways of working – and challenging entrenched views/ways of doing things
- Legal teams have worked hard to recruit legal experts to fit with Pathway team needs

What have we learned?

- Ability for Pathway and Legal teams to spot trends together e.g. EU issues around resettlement
- Able to see issues “well below the radar”
- Taking on cases is time consuming and complex...and necessary
- Joint advocacy (legal & medical) is a powerful thing
- It is challenging...!

Ongoing challenges

- Most vulnerable patients need more protection and support – still holds true
- Tension: hospital desire to move patients on vs. Pathway desire to take more time
- Capacity issues in Pathway and legal teams – scratching surface of referrals
- Level of complexity and provision of care different for every hospital; be mindful of the ‘crossovers’ when handling legal matters.

Ongoing challenges

- Impact of NHS charging - when patients clearly cannot pay
- Taking on cases 'at risk'
- Difficult to build a strategic evidence base e.g. to make case to NHS...
- ...focus of evaluation to date has been on collecting statistics and learning from each pilot project
- We haven't spread the word enough yet...

Getting the message out

- Need to shift focus towards:
 - building strategic evidence
 - lobbying & advocacy
 - disseminating good practice
 - identifying system change levers

What's happening now?

- The good work continues
- New providers
- New funding streams
- Dedicated posts – more scope for face-to-face assistance
- More patients getting help
- Another hospital receiving advice

Providers



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Funders



Trust for London

Tackling poverty and inequality

GREATER
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A B Charitable Trust

**CITY
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TRUST**



The City of London Solicitors' Company



The City of London Law Society

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Sharing findings & next steps

- Build library of strategic evidence (case studies, journal articles, evaluation findings)
- Share it...(networks, Faculty, public dissemination event)
- Collaborative bid – to support strategic evidence gathering, maintaining provision & developing advocacy/policy approach
- What else?

“There is moral integrity in [continuing with] this project. Patients received help which would not have happened otherwise. We are able to reach the most vulnerable groups, help them and make them feel valued. Many have never felt this before. This project has the power to make real and positive change for patients.”