

London Legal Support Trust plays a key role in enabling not-for-profit providers of social welfare advice to come together to tackle the challenges involved in delivering safe, reliable and sustainable advice services. The Advice Workforce Development Fund is a programme which brings together not just advice providing organisations, but also funders of advice, health and local authority stakeholders and for some work streams, also commercial law firms.

Hi, I'm Chris, and I help oversee the Advice Workforce Program, which is all about making the social welfare advice sector as sustainable and inclusive as possible. Like a number of sectors, we're currently experiencing some acute and longer term challenges to the recruitment and retention of staff, as well as training and progression pathways.

But with its focus on cross-sector collaboration, this programme offers the space to explore and work on these challenges more deeply. It includes, for example, projects which are testing and developing the best ways of attracting and keeping disabled people within a sector, projects supporting apprentice solicitors to train, qualify and practice in the sector, and projects enabling people from more diverse ethnic communities to join, thereby making services more culturally sensitive and effective.

By 2026 there'll have been nearly 500 participants across these projects taking part in a wide range of training and development opportunities. There are other strands of the program too. We work closely with our friends and partners within the commercial legal sector on a particularly exciting work stream which explores the use of the apprenticeship or growth and skills levy to support legal apprenticeships in a way which also works well for the firms who are transferring their levy.

All of this work is being funded by London Propel, a collaboration of funders who want to support communities to tackle the systemic inequalities which so many Londoners face. London Legal Support Trust is a key member of and contributor to Propel. We therefore wanted to thank you for taking part in this year's London Legal Walk.

You're not just helping raise funds for organisations to be able to deliver advice, but also address some of the structural challenges facing those organisations too. Our grateful thanks.