

ANNUAL IMPACT REPORT 2025



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Our Mission



Who We Are

London Legal Support Trust (LLST) is an independent charity that raises funds for free legal advice services in London and the South East. Our mission is to ensure free legal advice providers in London and the South East continue to exist so they can provide vital and life-changing legal advice to vulnerable and voiceless people who otherwise could not afford to access or defend their rights.

Our values are:

- **Responsive and Needs-Led:** We adapt flexibly and quickly to the changing needs of the people and organisations we support.
- **Trusted and Open:** We build trust through transparency, integrity, and clear communication with all our stakeholders.
- **Equitable and Fair:** We champion fairness and ensure that equity guides our actions and decisions.
- **Leadership:** We lead by example, driving positive change and inspiring others in the access to justice sector.
- **Collaborative:** We work in partnership, valuing diverse voices and shared goals to achieve greater impact.
- **Committed to Access to Justice:** We are unwavering in our mission to improve access to justice for those who need it most.

Our Strategy

LLST has three strategic priorities to help the advice sector become more sustainable, so they can continue providing vital, life-changing advice to thousands of desperate people seeking access to justice. Through our work, we aim to:

1. Increase funds and resources for the advice sector.
2. Identify and increase awareness of the needs of the advice sector.
3. Strengthen, support and increase the skills, capacity, and knowledge of the advice sector.

186,716
People
Supported by
our COEX
partners in
2025

A Message From Our CEO & Co-chairs

2025 was a defining year for the London Legal Support Trust (LLST) and the free legal advice sector. Amid profound social and political uncertainty, LLST supported, connected, and strengthened the organisations protecting access to justice across London and the South East.

Advice charities continued to operate under immense pressure. Demand rose as housing insecurity deepened, immigration and asylum systems remained hostile, and public funding failed to keep pace. The socio-political climate also became more challenging, with far-right rhetoric and activity targeting migrants and the services, increasing pressure on services that work with them. These risks to clients and frontline staff made solidarity and collective action more important than ever.

In this context, LLST's role as a funder, convenor and advocate for the sector has been crucial. Through our grant making, partnerships and sector building work, we supported advice organisations not only to respond to immediate need but to adapt and collaborate in difficult circumstances.



CEO: Nezahat Cihan
Co-chairs: Richard Dyton, and Joy Julien

Some highlights of the year were the [Advising Londoners Partnership \(ALP\)](#) being recognised at the Advising Londoners Awards with the Best Pan-London Advice Service award. Also, the Advice Workforce Development Fund (AWDF) achieved a huge milestone by hosting its first-ever conference: the [Helping Hands Conference](#). Once again, the London Legal Walk demonstrated the power of collective action, raising over £1 million for the second year running thanks to thousands of walkers, law firms, chambers and supporters who continue to stand shoulder-to-shoulder with the legal advice sector and champion access to justice.

Throughout the year, LLST remained focused on long-term sector resilience, recognising that free legal advice agencies need not only funding, but stability, fair working conditions, skilled staff and strong networks to withstand growing external pressures.

This report reflects what we achieved together in 2025: leadership in challenging times, meaningful collaboration, and an unwavering commitment to justice and dignity for all. To our partners, funders, supporters and the advice organisations at the heart of our work—thank you. Your dedication ensures that access to justice remains possible for those who need it most. We are proud of the role LLST has played this year, and we remain resolute in our commitment to stand with the free legal advice sector in the years ahead.

Our Impact: A Summary of 2025

In 2025, we strengthened access to justice across London by supporting agencies that provide free legal advice, investing in the advice workforce, and raising vital funds to sustain free legal advice services at a time of increasing demand.

We played a key convening role through the London Specialist Advice Forum, bringing together over 170 professionals from more than 70 agencies. These spaces enabled shared learning, collaboration and strategic leadership, helping the sector respond to pressures such as legal aid billing, workforce shortages, policy change, and the growing role of technology in advice delivery.

The Advice Workforce Development Fund (AWDF) made significant progress in improving pay, conditions and retention across the sector. In 2025, the Fund hosted its first-ever conference, *Helping Hands: Valuing the Advice Workforce*, published vital sector-wide research on pay and conditions, laying foundations for long-term workforce sustainability.

Through our Billing Project, we helped advice agencies maximise legal aid income by improving billing systems, clearing historic backlogs and sharing best practice. This work generated over £287,000, directly strengthening organisational resilience and protecting frontline services.

We continued to provide long-term organisational support through our Centres of Excellence Programme, distributing over £400,000 in unrestricted funding alongside tailored training, consultancy and coaching for 42 advice organisations. Building on this success, we confirmed plans to relaunch the programme in 2026 as the Legal Advice Sustainability Scheme (LASS), expanding access to support and focusing on long-term stability.

The Advising Londoners Partnership (ALP) was awarded the Best Pan-London advice service on 18th November at the Advising Londoners Awards. Through ALP's work in 2025, partners secured nearly £9 million in income improvements, delivering direct financial relief, strengthening household resilience, and making a tangible difference to people's lives across the capital.

Fundraising remained a major driver of impact. The London Legal Walk raised over £1 million for the second consecutive year, engaging more than 19,000 legal professionals. Since its launch in 2005, the Walk has raised £12.5 million for free legal advice. Additional events, including the Great Legal Bake, challenge events and 12 regional walks, brought communities together and generated further essential funds.

Together, these activities strengthened the advice sector and helped ensure that people facing injustice could access timely, high-quality legal support.

How We Support The Advice Sector

Advice Workforce Development Fund

The Advice Workforce Development Fund (AWDF) is a collaborative programme dedicated to strengthening and sustaining London's social welfare advice sector. Funded by the Propel programme, its mission is to build a sustainable, effective and diverse advice workforce that serves Londoners at the point of need.

2025 was a significant year for the programme. In June, we hosted its first ever conference, [Helping Hands: Valuing the Advice Workforce](#), alongside colleagues in the Advising Londoners Partnership. At the conference, we launched [two landmark reports](#) addressing pay and conditions across the sector.

We also commissioned a workforce-related organisational capacity project to explore key challenges facing advice organisations and to identify solutions, which will be launched in summer 2026.

The AWDF programme has continued to act as a host for ongoing work to co-produce a London-wide Advice Strategy, supporting collaboration and long-term planning across the sector.

London Specialist Advice Forum

The Forum, which LLST coordinates and provides the secretariat for, brings together frontline specialist free legal advice agencies from across the capital. Since its establishment in 2020, it has grown into a supportive network of 270 members.

At its core, the Forum creates opportunities for knowledge exchange, open discussion, peer support, collaboration, and networking. By identifying emerging issues and exploring solutions, members help strengthen a sector that plays a crucial role in ensuring fair access to justice. Alongside the Forum, we facilitate subgroups that enable more focused discussion and shared learning for community care practitioners, legal aid billing staff, and early-career professionals.

In 2025, we brought together more than 70 organisations and almost 170 individuals across our quarterly Forum meetings and regular subgroup sessions. Forum meetings during the year explored a wide range of topical developments and issues, including the increase in employer National Insurance contributions, proposed cuts to disability benefits, the use of AI, changes to immigration and asylum policy, the rise of the far-right, and the Employment Rights Bill - and their impact on specialist free legal advice agencies and the communities they support.

Billing Project

Our fourth-iteration Billing Project supports advice agencies to recover the maximum possible legal aid funding. As part of the project, we fund a dedicated billing coordinator who works across three agencies to clear legal aid billing backlogs, resolve complex cases, and implement more effective billing systems, helping to secure much-needed income. In the context of the serious disruption caused by the cyber-attack on the Legal Aid Agency (LAA) in spring 2025, and despite the pausing of some of the LAA's systems for the remainder of the year, the project has so far generated more than £287,000 in legal aid income for the three delivery partners. The project also brings staff together to share learning and good practice through the Legal Aid Billing Subgroup of the London Specialist Advice Forum.

Looking ahead, we are working with training providers to develop an accessible course that will spread the skills and awareness associated with the billing coordinator role more widely across the free legal advice sector, supporting long-term financial sustainability and protecting access to justice.

Advising Londoners Partnership

2025 marked the final year of the Advising Londoners Partnership (ALP) (previously the Cost-of-Living Crisis Prevention Advice Project), a collaborative programme bringing together the Greater London Authority (GLA), London Legal Support Trust (LLST), and the London Citizens Advice network to respond to the ongoing cost-of-living crisis. Through targeted funding for advice services delivered by law centres, Citizens Advice, and other legal advice agencies across London, the partnership supported Londoners facing acute financial pressure during a period of sustained economic hardship.

In its final year, ALP funded 20 delivery partners who provided vital advice and guidance to just under 20,000 Londoners, helping them stabilise their finances, access essential support, and navigate complex legal and social challenges.

Since 2022, through this work, partners secured nearly £43 million in financial gains for Londoners, making a tangible difference to people's lives across the capital.

ALP was awarded Best Pan-London Advice Service at the Advising Londoners Awards in November 2025.





We Support Free Legal Advice Agencies to Make a Difference:



Samuel and David were both in the middle of their GCSEs and A-levels when their parents' relationship broke down due to domestic abuse. Suddenly, they were homeless – alongside their mum, brother, and sister – evicted with barely enough time to gather their revision notes. Their mum was resourceful. She relied on a friend for a place to stay that first night, then presented to the Council for help, despite the anxiety overwhelming the family. However, due to a lack of communication, they were turned away – they didn't have access to public funds.

In desperation, they came to LRMN. In 2023, 1,671 people turned to LRMN for advice.

Our service navigator immediately took steps to support the family. They helped them into emergency accommodation, found longer-term housing, and connected Mum with counselling services. Our immigration team then took on her case – and successfully helped her settle her status! Now, she and her family have greater security for the future. The children can focus on growing up, rather than worrying about where they'll sleep each night.

Thanks to Mum's knowledge and determination, she found her way to LRMN, where we worked as a team to help her get back on her feet. The LRMN team collaborates closely – not just internally, but also with partners like local councils. This joined-up approach means we can ensure people get the help they need, while also encouraging our partners to take steps to embed sanctuary for all.

Lewisham Refugee and Migrant Network (LRMN) - Recipients of ALP funding

Names have been changed for anonymity.

COEx: 10 Years of Impact

A year after the 2012 LASPO changes came into force, significantly reducing the scope of civil legal aid and severely impacting the free legal advice sector, LLST developed the ‘Centres of Excellence’ programme to provide core funding and development support for sustainable free legal advice agencies in London and the South East to help them become stable and remain viable in a very difficult funding climate.

Key Impact Metrics

Total Organisations Supported:	Total Funding Delivered:	Approachability Rating
43	£4,000,000	9.4/10

From Then till Now

First Three Years

- **2015** - first **20** organisations join the programme
- **2016** - **24** organisations supported
- **2017**- **34** organisations supported

2018 - 2019

- **2018** - **36** organisations supported, and the amount of funding given out through the programme passes **£1 million**
- **2019** - **38** organisations are supported, and **City Bridge Foundation** became a funding partner for the programme

2020 - 2021

- **2020** - **39** organisations supported, the **National Lottery** becomes a funding partner, and LLST holds the first London Specialist Advice Forum
- **2021** - The amount of total funding given out surpasses **£2 million**

2022 till Now

- **2022**- **43** organisations supported
- **2023** - The amount of total funding given out surpasses **£3 million**
- **2024**:LLST commissions a review of the COEx programme
- **2025**: One of the COEx partners has to close, leaving **42** organisations in receipt of support. The total funding given through the programme approaches **£4 million!** The review is completed.

What happened in 2025?

With the help of City Bridge Foundation and the National Lottery, we have continued to provide unrestricted funding, training, and consultancy support for 42 free legal advice agencies through our COEx programme

Some highlights of the year included:

- Over £400k distributed in unrestricted grants and partnership payments
- Over 125 places have been provided on training courses focused on topics ranging from project and people management to safeguarding, workforce culture, resilience and lived experience.
- 7 individuals have been provided with 1:1 coaching to support them in their roles and leadership responsibilities
- 3 agencies have received agency-level consultancy support to help strengthen systems, plan for sustainability and respond to current pressures
- 168 individuals from 72 different agencies attended meetings of the London Specialist Advice Forum and/or Forum subgroups based around Community Care, Legal Aid Billing and Apprentices & Trainees

What's Coming Next in 2026?

In 2026, we'll be relaunching the programme under its new name – Legal Advice Sustainability Scheme (LASS). While the core elements of the programme remain, we're adopting a new delivery model to ensure that we can continue to provide long term support and funding to free specialist legal advice agencies across London and the South East, while also opening the programme up to new organisations and continuing to adapt and respond to the changing needs of the sector.

Some of the key developments include:

- **Opening the programme up to new partners:** Through an open application process, small cohorts, based on areas of identified need, will be supported with funding and tailored consultancy over a 5 year period.
- **Establishing a more structured LASS Alumni Network:** Existing COEx Partners will be transitioned to the new programme over the next 2-3 years. As part of the new LASS Alumni Network they will maintain access to training and consultancy support and funding will continue to be available but distributed in a way that involves the partners themselves in helping to identify and address the most pressing needs of the Network in a more open and transparent way.
- **A refreshed training and consultancy offer:** While we aim to remain responsive to requests from the sector, we've also recognised the need to ensure a clearer focus on addressing some of the critical challenges facing organisations including funding stability, a healthy and resilient workforce and encouraging and supporting adaptability in the face of change.

Raising Funds for Free Legal Advice: London Legal Walk



London Legal Walk (LLW) is the largest fundraising event in the legal calendar, bringing the sector together in a powerful show of solidarity for access to justice. Building on the success of recent years, the event raised over £1 million in 2025 for the second year in a row.

More than 19,000 legal professionals took part, representing every corner of the legal sector. From judges and barristers' chambers to solicitors' firms, in-house legal teams, Law Centres, law schools, independent advice agencies, and Citizens Advice, the Walk reflects the sector's commitment and unity.

First launched in 2005 with just 330 walkers, the LLW has grown into LLST's flagship event. Over the years, it has raised more than £12.5 million to support free legal advice services that help people access justice when they need it most.

Our Events

Our events play a vital role in bringing supporters across the legal and advice sectors together to raise awareness and funds for access to justice.

Throughout the year, participants across London and the South East took part in a range of events and challenges, some of which are listed below. [Click here to find out about our events.](#)

Excluding the London Legal Walk, our events raised over £ 157,000 with over 2,000 participants helping to support free legal advice agencies.



The Great Legal Bake

Our sweetest fundraiser of the year took place as part of [Pro Bono Week](#).

This event invited both seasoned and not-so-seasoned bakers from across the legal sector to put their skills to the test by creating delicious treats and hosting bake sales in their office, chambers, court or university.

LLST hosted its own bake sale inside the Royal Courts of Justice.

Together, the Great Legal Bake raised over an astonishing £28,000.

Regional Walks

From July to September, we delivered 12 regional walks across the South East.

Walks took place in Guildford, Oxford, Chichester, Eastbourne, Crawley, Brighton, Reading, Southampton, Hackney, Hastings, Tunbridge Wells, and Winchester.

Together, these Walks brought together over 1,780 walkers in total and raised over £69,000 to support free legal advice agencies.

Challenge Events

Throughout the year, we had a wide range of challenge events that invited supporters to push their limits, connect with our amazing LLST community, and raise vital funds that ensure everyone has access to justice.

These events included skydives, Swim the Serpentine, Brighton and London Marathons, Spartan challenges, and the Big Half.

Together, these events raised £25,500



Every Pound Raised And Step Taken Makes A Crucial Difference:

Mr. Hodge, a 74-year-old man, first came to us during the winter shelter period, appearing homeless and destitute. He was accompanied by a close family member who claimed they were both without housing. Initially, Mr. Hodge's situation seemed straightforward, but over time, and through regular engagement, it became clear something more troubling was happening.

Mr. Hodge had no access to money beyond his pension, despite evidence of large transactions on his account. Eventually, he disclosed that he had lost two properties, accumulated over £100,000 in debt, and that the accompanying relative had full access to his bank account. The relative regularly withdrew funds, leaving Mr. Hodge unable to afford essentials. He described being emotionally manipulated with threats of suicide if he refused to comply.

We recognised this as financial and emotional abuse and raised an adult safeguarding referral. With our support, Mr. Hodge reported the abuse to the police, triggering a criminal investigation and arrest.

Mr. Hodge is now in secure housing, with safeguarding in place and support services assisting him in regaining independence. We continue to help challenge the debts in his name. This case shows how critical frontline services are in identifying and addressing hidden abuse.

Bromley Homeless Charity - Recipient of ALP Funding

Names have been changed for anonymity.

Support Our Work

Getting Involved as a Law Firm, Chambers or Company

We actively seek sponsorship from law firms, chambers, and companies to support our fundraising events. Sponsors benefit from a valuable opportunity to be recognised alongside LLST and to engage with our wide network of supporters.

Many organisations offer match funding for the charitable efforts of their employees. If you are taking part in one of our events, we encourage you to enquire about match funding within your organisation. You may be able to double the amount you raise!

[Find out more about how to get involved.](#)

Champions For Justice

For a minimum annual donation, you can join Champions for Justice and access invitations to exclusive events and networking opportunities with like-minded philanthropists committed to access to justice.

We offer three Champions membership levels: Supporter (£600 a year), Advocate (£1,200 a year), and Benefactor (£2,400 a year), allowing individuals to choose the level of support that suits them.

Becoming a Champion for Justice is a powerful way to provide sustained support to LLST's work through regular giving.

[Find out more about becoming a Champion.](#)

“It's great to be part of a network of other organisations, with all the shared information and opportunities to learn more. The funding enables us to keep our doors open!”

COEx Free Legal Advice Agency

Donations

You can donate directly to LLST online, by cheque, CAF or other charity bank voucher, direct bank transfer or standing order. **[Please visit our website for more information on how to donate.](#)**

LLST is hugely grateful for the donations we receive to support our grant-making work. By choosing LLST as your charity of the year or recipient of excess funds this year, you can help us continue to fund vital free legal advice services, while benefiting from tax relief on your donation.

Thank You

We could not have provided vital support to free legal advice agencies in London and the South East without our exceptional fundraisers, partners, trustees, and staff.

Funders Partners

Thank you to our Funder Partners:

City Bridge Foundation
Greater London Authority
Legal Education Foundation
National Lottery Community Foundation
Paul Hamlyn Foundation
Trust for London

We thank all the firms, chambers, courts and organisations that took part in the 2025 events and helped us raise a total of £1,197,869 and those individuals who donated to LLST directly or sponsored a friend, colleague, or family member who took part in one of the LLST events.

We thank all our staff who worked tirelessly throughout the year to ensure we continue raising vital funds and supporting free legal advice agencies in providing their much needed, often vital, services.

Finally, we thank all our trustees who have been very generous with their time, knowledge and experience to provide much needed advice and guidance.

We're proud of all we've achieved together in 2025. As we look ahead to 2026, we remain focused on supporting frontline advice agencies, responding to emerging needs, and helping shape a stronger, fairer legal advice sector.





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Bringing the latest resources, funding opportunities, events, training, and vacancies in the free legal advice sector.

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Thank you for taking the time to read this report. If you have any questions or would like to discuss our findings further, please don't hesitate to reach out to us.

londonlegalsupporttrust.org.uk