

## **Press Release | Putting money in people's pockets**

### **Our welfare benefits service delivers for people living in Brent**

**(Willesden, Wednesday, 8<sup>th</sup> August 2018)** Rough justice: problems with monthly assessment of pay and circumstances in universal credit, published, yesterday, by the Child Poverty Action Group highlights the daily challenges experience by our clients.

‘Hourly, 5 days a week we are supporting clients to maximise their income,’ stated Stuart Duffin, Director of Brent Community Law Centre. ‘Over June and July, with our work and interventions, 7 Brent families had a successful financial outcome and in total benefitted by £38,166.’

He continues, ‘This was made up of £18,156 arrears of Employment & Support Allowance, £12,686 arrears of Housing Benefit, £1,912 arrears of Pension Credit and an overpayment of Working Tax Credit amounting to £5,412 was written off.’

With expert legal advice, clients also had successful disability related benefit appeals. In fact, all gained significant additional weekly income.

Stuart outlines, ‘In one case this was an extra £29.05 pw, another £54.05 pw. One client (who had not received benefit pending the outcome of their appeal) had a potential new weekly income of £182.15pw.’

All these cases involved appeals to the First Tier/ Upper Tribunal or were complex multiple benefit issues. Achieving such outcomes requires solicitors with expert knowledge and skill, who are passionate, and who put in time and effort to ensure that clients have additional money in their pocket.

Stuart Duffin, Director of Brent community Law Centre provides some insight into the service, ‘On average 11 hours work over several months is needed to resolve each of the above cases, although one case had required 7 hours work in 1 week because of its complexity and urgency. Welfare Benefit appeal cases can take up to a year to fully resolve and we do not close a case until the benefit due, following the appeal decision, has been paid in full.’

He continues, ‘In June 2018 there were 4 hearings: all were Employment & Support Allowance appeals, and all were successful. 3 of the 4 were hearings by the First Tier Tribunal. All these clients will receive significant benefit arrears and increased weekly income in due course.’

Without the work and dedication of Brent Community Law Centre families in Brent will be locked out of the opportunity to reach a decent standard of living. **/Ends**

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## NOTES FOR EDITORS

### About Brent Community Law Centre

**Brent Community Law Centre**), has been providing legal and advocacy services since 1978.

We are an independent, more-than-profit, community organisation. We provide legal information and advice, undertake negotiation, court representation and conduct community legal education sessions.

We also engage in advocacy to address systemic justice issues within our community. Brent Community Law Centre plays an important and pivotal role in the local community in breaking down barriers that prevent access to justice in our community.

**Our vision** | To work towards a more just and fair society through providing access to legal services and legal education to members of the community.

**Our mission** | The Law Centre offers legal advice, casework and representation to individuals and groups. Spotting local trends and issues in the course of our work, we highlight them to bring about necessary policy changes and aim to prevent future problems.

**Our values** | To operate a Community Law Centre that is safe, reliable, confidential and respectful of the rights of the individual, groups and organisations that form the social fabric of our community.

**What we do at a glance** | Access to justice is crucial to a healthy democracy. We are committed to ensuring people understand their rights and are supported to enforce them. We provide advice and assistance with a wide range of legal issues. We are the local experts for issues to do with immigration, employment, housing, debt, welfare, public law and government agencies and more...

**Got a legal problem?** | Maybe we can help. We're lawyers. We listen carefully, we're friendly, and we help you find solutions you feel comfortable with. We're passionate about making sure that everyone, no matter how little money you have, has access to justice and enjoys real equality.

**In summary**, we offer legal advice...

**On these issues:** Debt & money advice, Employment, Housing & homelessness, Immigration, asylum & nationality, Welfare benefits, Community care.

**To these people:** All adults and young people.

**In these ways:** Telephone, Face-to-face Appointments, Drop-in, Email

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