



Thinking of becoming a Law Centre?

- Join a movement of lawyers that has fought for social justice for over 50 years
- Be supported by the only national membership body for legal advice organisations
- Raise your profile by taking on the Law Centre name, branding and reputation
- Gain access to member-only services and resources

About Law Centres

For half a century Law Centres have used the law as a tool for social change. Rooted in communities, their expert lawyers support vulnerable and disadvantaged people to seek justice. They provide free legal advice and representation, campaign on local issues, train and support other civil society organisations, educate people about the law and their rights, and create systemic change through public legal challenges.

Law Centres are experts in tackling the problems of everyday life: legal problems that, if unaddressed, can lead to homelessness, destitution, family breakup, detention or deportation. People in crisis often experience a perfect storm of legal issues, which is why most Law Centres can help with a range of issues including housing, immigration, employment, family, discrimination, education, welfare benefits, debt, community care and public law.

The Law Centre brand is synonymous with quality and highly specialised legal expertise. We set a high standard for our members so that people can have confidence in the advice and support they receive.

Importantly, Law Centres remain independent, with their own management committee and control over how they operate; we see this as key if Law Centres are to be able to respond effectively to their communities. They are however expected to work collaboratively for the good of the network.

About the Law Centres Network

Established in 1989, the Law Centres Network (LCN) supports its members by:

- Helping them to embed best practice in all areas of their operations and services;
- Convening them around regional and national strategic opportunities, and:
- Amplifying their collective voice on the national stage to increase their profile and influence public policy.

Our membership currently consists of 42 Law Centres in England, Wales and Northern Ireland, including several combined Citizens Advice and Law Centres.

Together, LCN and Law Centres have successfully fought government policies in court (such as the [Housing Possession Court Duty Scheme](#)), highlighted specific issues with the help of the media (like the [Windrush scandal](#)), and assisted in the coordination of emergency support (such as in the [aftermath of Grenfell](#)).

Read more about LCN's work last year in our [annual review](#).

Membership benefits

Identity

The 'Law Centre' name is trademarked and can only be used by members. We guard the use of the name, the brand and the reputation of Law Centres vigilantly. We also work continuously to strengthen the profile of Law Centres. Our 50th Anniversary campaign, [Make Law for All](#), and the [Law Centre History project](#) being undertaken in collaboration with Oxford University's Centre for Socio-Legal Studies and the British Library, are examples of how we do this.

Community

Law Centres are able to support, challenge, guide and encourage each other. People working for Law Centres feel a sense of belonging, which helps to build personal and organisational resilience. Each Law Centre is stronger for knowing that it is not working on its own. Locally, a Law Centre may be the only legal advice organisation, but Law Centres are part of a national network of peers, with a dedicated support organisation looking out for you.

Our Learning and development programme includes opportunities to be inspired by innovative projects and services, learn from peers across the sector, and explore how to embed best practice in your Law Centre.

Wellbeing

Free access to our Employee Assistance Programme from [Health Assured](#). Available to all staff, volunteers and trustees of Law Centres, as well as immediate family members. Support

includes counselling, information and advice on a range of personal and professional issues via a 24/7 telephone helpline, a dedicated app, and a wellbeing portal.

Events & Training

LCN hosts a range of events and training sessions throughout the year, as well as promoting opportunities from other providers. Last year we delivered 23 training sessions to 369 Law Centre staff, volunteers and trustees across a wide range of topics from paperless working to suicide first aid.

Memberships & Discounts

LCN leverages the buying power of the network to negotiate discounted rates on a range of products and services, including:

- Legal Aid Practitioners' Group membership for access to LAPG updates and discounted training
- LexisNexis subscription with access to [LexisLibrary](#) and [LexisPSL](#)
- [RightsNet](#) subscription
- Discounted [Professional Indemnity Insurance](#) through AdviceUK

Bespoke Support

Our Law Centre Members' Area provides templates, guidance, updates, training resources and a place for you to connect with other Law Centre members.

We offer specialist support, tailored to the specific needs of your Law Centre, including 1:1 support from LCN staff and other experts. This could include advice and support in key areas like legal practice, community engagement, governance, financial management, and managing people.

We can support Law Centres with IT upgrades and access to digital tools and support. Over 50% of Law Centres have now been migrated to Office 365, received new IT equipment, joined the IT support scheme and accessed our digital experts. We are developing various tools for Law Centres' specific needs including a multi-channel enquiry management system called EnquiryDesk and tools to assist with back-office functions like human resources and grant management.

We help Law Centres to identify and secure funding from grants and contracts. This includes 1:1 support from specialist consultants to develop your applications and improve your bid

writing skills. Last year we helped Law Centres to attract £950,000 in grants alone. We also work to influence funder strategies so that they stay relevant to the needs of Law Centres.

Representation & Advocacy

We work to influence the Legal Aid Agency, Ministry of Justice, other government departments, policy makers, think tanks, media, trusts and foundations. We do this in person, through consultations, by providing evidence to parliamentary committees and commissions, participating in workshops and roundtable events, via social media, and our partner organisations.

LCN National Conference

Law Centre staff, trustees and volunteers come together with other organisations from the advice sector to connect, learn, discover and explore (not to mention having a good time!).

The conference is usually hosted in a Law Centre's hometown. In the last few years we have gathered in Newcastle, Birmingham, Belfast, Bristol and London. It's a great opportunity to get to know your Law Centre colleagues and share in their triumphs, hear about issues that they have encountered and how they have overcome them, and learn more about new projects being introduced across the network.

Membership requirements

We work hard to protect our shared reputation so the bar for membership is intentionally high. Every Law Centre must meet our membership criteria and reflect our shared values. You can read the membership agreement in full here, but key criteria include:

- Operating as a registered charity or a charitable incorporated organisation (CIO)
- Serving a defined community of place or interest that doesn't already have a Law Centre presence
- Employing at least two lawyers (i.e. solicitor, barrister, or chartered legal executive). At least one of these people must be a Senior Solicitor with at least 3 years post-qualification experience
- Being led by and accountable to your local community
- Being governed by an active management committee
- Adopting our Law Centre branding, including our trademarked Law Centre name

Membership Fees

We use a tiered fee structure with bands based on your organisation's annual income. Current fees range from £1,555 to £5,719 per year, including LAPG membership and subscriptions to LexisNexis and RightsNet.

Becoming a member

The process of joining the network will vary depending on your starting point:

- **Existing organisations**

If your organisation is considering becoming a Law Centre, please read this document in full and review our Membership Agreement before you [contact us](#). We can help you to assess how well your current structure, activities and values satisfy our membership requirements and help you make a plan to become a Law Centre.

- **New organisations**

If you want to set up a new Law Centre from scratch we suggest you start by speaking to your nearest Law Centre. This is a great way to find out if there's already a Law Centre in your area. If there is, talk to them about how you can support their work. If you can't find a Law Centre in your area please [contact us](#) to discuss next steps. Although timescales can vary, it usually takes 2-5 years to establish a new Law Centre.

The application process

Although the joining process may change depending on your organisation, the journey normally looks like this:

1. Review the Law Centre Membership Agreement to establish how well your organisation meets our criteria.
2. Talk to us so that we can learn more about your organisation and answer any questions you might have about LCN / Law Centres and discuss timelines and process.
3. Be prepared to speak with other Law Centres who are geographically or topically close. There may be opportunities to collaborate and find support during your application process.
4. Complete the Membership Application form. This should reference not only the work you do and the structure of the organisation but also include how your values match ours and how you propose to collaborate across the Network.

5. We will invite you to speak with our profile team so that you fully understand your membership responsibilities and the requirements of rebranding.
6. We will carry out due diligence checks to establish the financial position of your organisation.
7. We will invite your CEO and Chair to meet with our Director and a member of our Executive Committee.
8. Assuming there are no financial or other concerns, we will make a recommendation to our Executive Committee that your application for membership is accepted.
9. Your application will be considered at our next General Meeting, which are held at least twice each year, usually in April and November. The outcome of your application will be decided by a vote of our member Law Centres.

Want to know more?

If you would like to discuss joining the Network, please contact our Head of Service Development, Simon Brown at simon@lawcentres.org.uk