



cl@n childlaw

Community Law Advice Network cl@n
Norton Park, 57 Albion Road, Edinburgh EH7 5QY
Tel: 075 275 66682 E-mail: info@clanchildlaw.org

Patron: Sheriff Gail Patrick

ANNUAL REPORT **December 2008-November 2009**

cl@n childlaw is a young and dynamic organisation offering a unique legal advocacy service to children and young people within Edinburgh and the Lothians. Our uniqueness reflects the lack of dedicated legal services to support children and young people, the ongoing challenges of championing the needs of children and young people, and the need to give practical effect to the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child, in particular Article 12, which is the right of children to have their voices heard.

Our services are provided by a small dedicated team. This team has an excellent blend of specialist legal training, coupled with wide ranging experience of working in community settings with children and young people, particularly in areas of deprivation. We provide a confidential and supportive environment for each client, with services tailored to meet the client's individual needs and personal situation, and work with clients in a holistic way throughout the legal process.

We deliver free legal advice and representation to children and young people in Edinburgh and the Lothians, who would otherwise have found it very difficult or impossible to access the legal help that they require. We help Children & Young People up to the age of 18, or 21 if they have been Looked After Children.

cl@n childlaw was launched at the Scottish Parliament in May 2008 and we have now completed our first full financial year of service delivery. We are delighted to have put our vision into practice and the outcomes achieved are remarkable. It is clear that the need which we identified exists. Through delivery of our unique legal advocacy service, we have successfully met that need, within the limits of our resources. Our challenge remains being able to meet that need efficiently and effectively. We plan to expand our operations as our resources increase, since the current need exceeds our present capacity.

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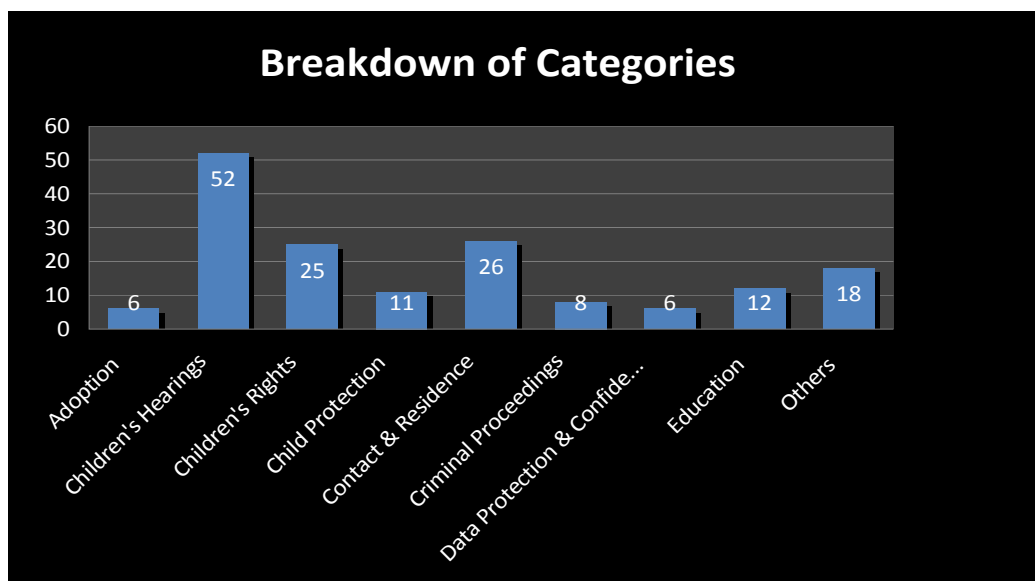
Company Limited by guarantee No. 335011

Registered Charity Number: SC039156

Legal Services delivered by cl@n childlaw

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WHAT KIND OF HELP DID CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE NEED?



The “Others” category includes *aliment, care leavers, kinship care, social work duties, Criminal Injuries Compensation, homelessness, parental rights, press reports on children and succession rights.*

Our feedback indicates that all users reported an increased knowledge of the legal process.

No complaints were received. We represented children and young people at court, Children’s Hearings or at tribunals on 71 occasions, some of which took as long as 3 days.

HAVE WE HELPED LOOKED AFTER CHILDREN?

Of the 164 children and young people we helped over the last year, about 60% were looked after children. Looked after children were referred to our service via the legal representation scheme in the Children’s Hearings System, by Children’s Rights Officers, Who Cares? Scotland and various other voluntary organisations.

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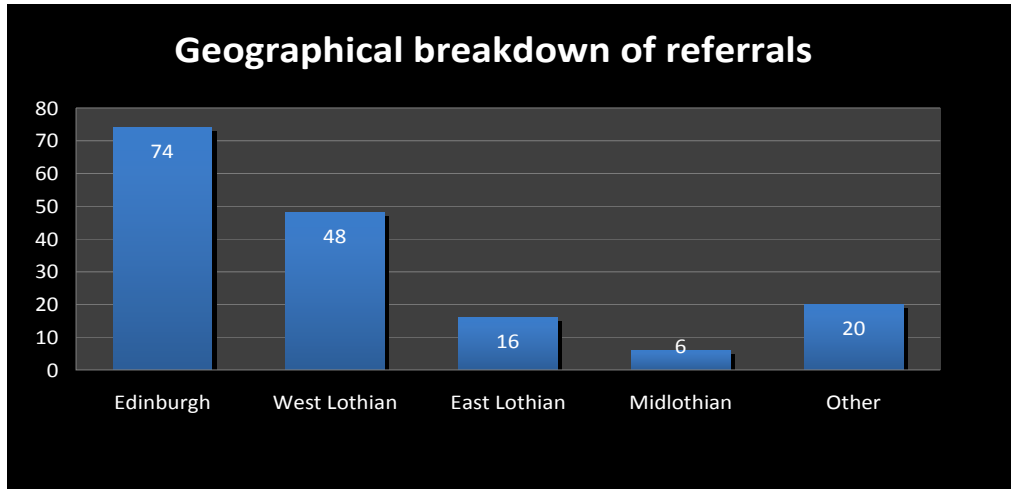
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WHERE HAVE THE REFERRALS COME FROM?

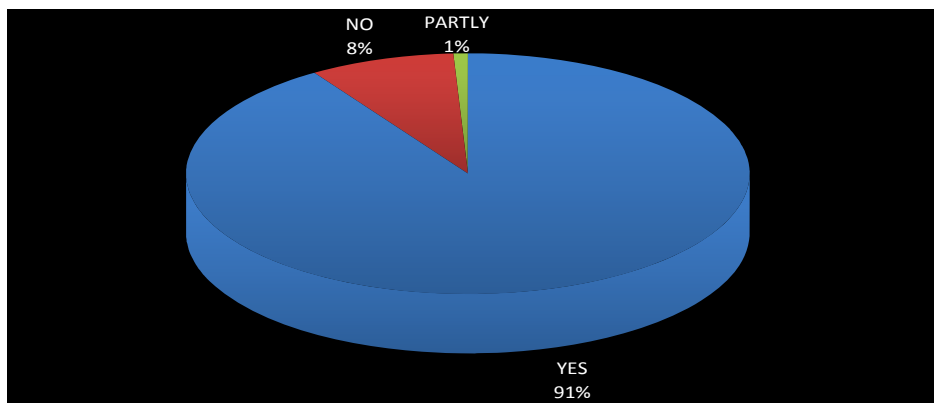


HOW HAVE CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE FOUND US?

Referrals have come from different agencies, including various voluntary organisations, social work departments and solicitors and also via the internet, through friends and relatives, from the Press and from school.

The children and young people who have used our service are mostly between the ages of 14 and 16, but we have also helped children as young as 10 years old and previously looked after young people up to the age of 21.

DID CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE ACHIEVE WHAT THEY WANTED?



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WOULD THEY HAVE GOT THE SAME EXTENT OF LEGAL HELP WITHOUT CL@N CHIDLAW?

Our service-users report that they would not have received the same legal “child-friendly” advocacy service were it not for cl@n childlaw. On occasions where we were not able to represent children ourselves, we provided preliminary advice and referred them to other solicitors who were able to assist.

Feedback:

“It is not usual for lawyers to be with you for all of the hearings and court for over a year now. It has meant that I haven’t had to explain things to more than one which is really good.”

“The lawyer took my feelings into consideration also meeting in somewhere I felt comfortable.”

““I would never have found someone to assist if it hadn’t been for your help and advice”

My daughter felt that someone was taking an interest in what she had to say...This way of having her own lawyer was less stressful.”

“cl@n advised and represented me on behalf of my son in a tribunal. I could not have gone through the process without them as the Council had employed the services of a legal advocate. I couldn’t have done it without them and wouldn’t hesitate to recommend them to others.”

TRAINING

We have trained over 150 professionals in relation to Child Law. Courses have covered Children’s Rights and Responsibilities, Children’s Hearings, Child Protection and the Law and Giving Evidence in Court. Bookings have been made by individuals as well as by groups. Those trained have included teachers, voluntary sector workers, social workers, and solicitors working with children.

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Feedback:

“Fantastic level of information regarding relevant up-to-date law, policy and legislation”

“Very clear and informative”

“Will give me greater confidence when dealing with social workers and particularly when I’m advocating for young people”

“Very informative and easy to understand content”

“I have a better understanding of children’s panels”

“It will give me more confidence in producing a child protection policy, procedures and guidance for the organisation”

“Very interesting and relevant. I enjoyed the chance to discuss issues with multi-agency workers.”

“Excellent update, helping to refocus on child protection issues in relation to family law.”

POLICY DEVELOPMENT

We undertake policy development work when it arises from our work. We have a keen interest in Additional Support Needs Tribunals and have responded to consultations regarding their reform. We have been mentioned in several debates in the Scottish Parliament. We contributed to the scoping study regarding advocacy for children and young people. We provided information to the Scottish Parliament in relation to a petition regarding court reporters. The Children’s Hearings Scotland Bill will be introduced to the Scottish Parliament at the beginning of 2010, and we formed a working group who produced a detailed response to the Draft Bill to the Scottish Government. We are also members of the Scottish Parliament Cross Party Group for Children and Young People which enables us to keep up-to-date with current developments.

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PUBLICATION

We provided the text for the Scottish Government's publication "At What Age Can I?" This is a booklet designed for Young People and sets out the age limitations set down by the law regarding certain activities. We understand that over 62,000 booklets have been circulated across Scotland.

FINANCE & FUNDING

	2008/09 (cash basis- estimate)	2007/08		2008/09(cash basis- estimate)	2007/08
Income	£	£	Expenditure	£	£
Grants & Donations	62,061	47,097	Charitable Activities	82,527	56,250
Income from Charitable Activities	29,035	9,499	Governance costs	1,000	1,303
TOTAL	91,096	56,785	TOTAL	83,527	59,373

Thanks to those who supported us during 2008-09. They include: the Scottish Government Children's Rights Team, Lloyds TSB Foundation, Anderson Strathern, Simpson & Marwick, HBJ Gateley Wareing, the Co-operative Bank, John Watson's Trust and individual supporters.

THE FUTURE

At cl@n childlaw, we are very much looking forward to our next year of operation. We plan to reach out to more children and young people who would not otherwise have received the legal help that they require. We aim to do this by recruiting another solicitor to increase our capacity and enable us to contribute further towards better outcomes for the children and young people of Scotland.

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