



Spring Newsletter

June
2025

What's included?

- Hague Explained Workshop write up by Izzy Casey
- Results Day Social write up by Aidan Keogh
- CAB Form Signing Project write up by Danica Custance
- McKenzie Friend Project write up by Lois Williams and Maria McRobb-Roldan
- Simmons and Simmons Sponsored Event write up by Sana Haj Mohamed
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- Legal Clinic Internship write up by Maria McRobb-Roldan
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- HILS Dinner and Awards by Maria McRobb-Roldan

Reminders

We hope that exam season went well!

The Legal Clinic Enquiry Form will be closed from June to October. However, we are still taking referrals from our partner agencies, so if you are able to work over summer, please make yourself known!

Upcoming Events

- Irwin Mitchell Solicitors Popcorn and Pimms Event- Thursday 3rd July (application required- see emails)
- President of the Law Society visit to Highfield Campus- 9th July (application required- see emails)

Contact Info

Instagram: @uoslegalclinic

LinkedIn: University of Southampton Legal Clinics

Created by Lizzie Brooke and Holly Gould

Hague Explained CIC

Workshop

By Isabelle Casey



On March 19th, Clinic advisors had the opportunity to receive a perceptive workshop from Antia Gera, co-founder of Hague Explained CIC, a non-profit community organisation with the aim of raising awareness of the Hague Abduction Convention (HAC), what it entails, and how families can avoid finding themselves trapped within enduring international litigation.

Anita began by explaining the Hague Convention, in context of its purpose and the broad scope of circumstances it may cover, unknowingly to many. We learnt that the Hague Convention could be engaged where families live in countries they were not born in, they have citizenship in a different country to the one they are living, they plan to move to a different country, or they have family living internationally. HAC is ratified by 103 states and aims to secure the prompt return of children wrongfully being retained in any contracting state, to ensure rights of custody are protected and to prevent undue separation of parents and children.

When HAC is engaged, there is the aim to return children within 6 weeks, unless one of the six permissible defences are successful; these defences include settlement, consent (from the parent), the parent is not exercising their parental rights, there is a grave risk of harm, the child has expressly objected to being removed or there is a violation of human rights. Anita highlighted how rarely these defences succeed in HAC cases, suggesting that any harm or objection must be express, and specific to the child.

Finally, Anita offered insight into how a HAC case can be avoided. It was suggested that where families are faced with the possibility of moving to different countries, they should consider making an agreement early in this process to set out specific boundaries in respect of the wishes of all parties to therefore avoid later litigation. It was suggested that it would be an effective method to instruct a lawyer who has experience in international family law, and this support would be furthered if the lawyer has experience within the countries in question – it may be useful for litigants to approach charities, such as Hague Explained CIC, who can offer effective guidance to where they may be able to gain assistance. Another option suggested was that the parents can remain in the country until the child/children are 16, as those who are 16 and older no longer come under the scope of HAC and can therefore move country under their free will.

Hearing from Anita was an incredibly insightful opportunity and many of us advisors look forward to working closely with Hague Explained CIC to offer advice and workshops on the Hague Convention.

Results Day Social

By Aidan Keogh



**Aidan Keogh, Ioannis Thomas, Tvisha Fakir,
Maddy Nicholl, and Danica Custance**

The Global Legal Clinic hosted a social event for all Clinic advisors on results day, offering a chance for Clinic members to celebrate and for newer advisors to socialise outside of Clinic work.

It was a warm and welcoming atmosphere and a great opportunity for newer advisors to get to know and build a relationship with other existing and new advisors, who they may be working with on cases and other Clinic projects in the future. As well as this, it was also a chance to ask questions of the experienced advisors and chat about how everyone was finding the Clinic so far. It also doubled as an opportunity to celebrate academic success during the January exam period, stressing the importance of a healthy balance between studies and work in the Clinic, with both being beneficial for future success in the legal profession!

CAB Court Form

Project

By Danica Custance

citizens
advice

Southampton

The Legal Clinic has collaborated with Citizens Advice Southampton in which student advisors have the opportunity to assist individuals with completing court forms necessary to continue the legal process. Citizens Advice Southampton already offered form filling assistance for the most common types of court forms, but this collaboration allows even more of the community to be supported. This is important as courts will only process correct forms, meaning incorrect forms are a significant barrier to access to justice in the UK. Therefore, more assistance provided for these early steps will support access to justice and can ensure that individuals are heard by the justice system.

This program also supports the student advisors involved as it gives them relevant legal experience in the judicial process. The students involved are gaining exposure to common types of forms that they will be required to know during their legal career. More importantly, however, the students are also working with clients and gaining a greater understanding of some of the issues that prevent access to justice. For example, many individuals with language barriers or learning disabilities may struggle with court forms, and the student advisors must adapt their explanations to ensure comprehension. This is important as the students want to encourage the clients' independent understanding of the judicial system as they are advocating for themselves and must understand the process to seek accurate judicial support. The student advisors are also using this opportunity to understand other perspectives of the legal system. Awareness of the issues that these clients face will encourage commercial awareness in the students, as they can consider where law firms and other organisations should focus their attention when supporting access to justice.

So far, I have only met with one client in this program. However, that single experience demonstrated to me how many unforeseeable issues can arise when filling out the forms and the difficulties individuals may face when trying to understand what information they need to communicate to the courts. I am incredibly excited to continue working with this program as it demonstrates the various obstacles to accessing justice and is encouraging me to consider how these can be minimized in the future.

McKenzie Friend Project

By Lois Williams

Having served as a McKenzie Friend, I can say without hesitation that the experience was both eye-opening and enriching. For those unfamiliar, a McKenzie Friend is someone who supports a litigant in person (i.e., someone representing themselves in court) by offering moral support, assisting with paperwork, and providing quiet advice during hearings. While we don't have the right to speak on behalf of the litigant unless the court allows it, our presence can make a significant difference.

Our first day in court did not go as planned. The hearing was postponed at the last minute because the court had lost the relevant files. It was frustrating, not just for us but especially for the client, who had emotionally and mentally prepared for that day. However, the unseen benefit was that we returned a second day with even greater preparation and understanding of the process. That extra time allowed us to fine-tune our support, review the case notes, and enter the situation with a level of knowledge already, ensuring the client was as confident and calm as possible.



Jake Dolendo Hernandez, Abigail Bazyluk, Celine Hanna, and Saleema Flynn

What truly stood out during the second hearing was the judge's approach. In an unexpected but welcome move, the judge directly addressed my partner and me, asking for our opinion on points of law relevant to the case. Although McKenzie Friends typically do not speak in court unless permitted, this moment signalled a high level of trust and respect for the role we were playing.

Continued

By Lois Williams

This interaction was incredibly validating. It demonstrated how, when adequately prepared and professional, a McKenzie Friend can be seen as a valuable contributor to the legal process rather than just a silent observer.

I feel that moment was beneficial in several ways. For the client, it demonstrated that their support team was taken seriously by the court, which boosted their confidence and sense of fairness. For us, it was a rare opportunity to engage directly with the judiciary, thereby deepening our understanding of how legal reasoning is applied in real time.

Being asked to articulate our legal understanding forced us to clarify the issues, underscoring the importance of remaining composed, professional, and well-informed, traits that can elevate the contribution of any McKenzie Friend far beyond just moral support.



Jake Dolendo Hernandez, Abigail Bazyluk, Celine Hanna, and Saleema Flynn

Before becoming a McKenzie Friend, I had only a general idea of how the family and civil court systems worked. This real-life experience taught me more than any book or video could. I now understand how hearings are structured, the importance of staying focused on the law and facts, and the significant impact that careful preparation can make.

I encourage anyone interested in law, advocacy, or helping others to consider taking on this role.

McKenzie Friend Project

By Maria McRobb-Roldan

At their second court appearance as McKenzie friends, Lois and Maria were supporting the same clients who had specifically requested our return after appreciating the support we had provided. This hearing centred on a complex contract dispute. During proceedings, the judge directly addressed us with a question about the fundamental aims of contractual remedies, testing our legal knowledge in real-time. Throughout the hearing, it was essential to stay focused on taking notes, whilst remaining available at any moment to provide support to the clients. By supporting the clients through detailed note taking, it meant they were able to concentrate on arguing their case and could ask us for details on what had already been said. The experience reinforced how McKenzie's friend work combines legal knowledge with mentorship, building clients' confidence and competence within the judicial system while providing crucial moral support during stressful litigation. After learning about the holistic lawyer approach to client care, this experience highlighted the importance of seeing and treating any client as a human that might need more than just being told what the law is. Clients have many needs that extend further than asking about the law and addressing and supporting them emotionally might help more than you think.

Simmons and Simmons Sponsored Event

By Sana Haj Mohamed

The Simmons and Simmons event was delightful to attend, where speaking to the legal trainees provided me useful and fresh insight into the application processes. It was definitely more intriguing to speak one-on-one and gain a genuine perspective from the trainees, rather than reading about general advice.

While obviously the networking and the insightful aspect of the evening were the highlight, the work of the legal clinic team to provide a fun evening did not go unnoticed either. Pizza alongside drinks were provided that we were able to enjoy while speaking to everyone and getting to know more of the clinic team and speaking to members I usually do not see often was incredible!

Thank you to the organisers of this event, it was definitely worth going to!



Prize Giving Event

By Shann Jalaly

On Wednesday 30th April, the Clinic hosted its annual prizegiving event to recognise the hard work of individual students and teams of students. This was a great way of getting together to celebrate the Clinic's accomplishments before we all had to focus on exams. Alongside Clinic members, there were representatives from Citizens Advice and Hodge Jones and Allen Solicitors, our official sponsors, in attendance, with Dan Denton delivering a fantastic speech.

In total, there were 12 prizes with 20 very well-deserved winners. Dr Madhloom explained why each person or team won their prize before announcing the winner, to ensure that their hard work was fully recognised without anyone feeling awkward! A full list of the winners can be found [here](#) on the SharePoint.

I was especially grateful to bring home two certificates, one for Best Overall Engagement (which I received alongside Danica Custance), and the second for Best Team Collaboration alongside Martha Fiske and Olivia Witczak. When you work alongside others in a project, it is very fulfilling to see them recognised for their efforts! I also found that I learnt a lot about many other Clinic projects, such as the fantastic work done for Junior Lawyers Against Poverty.

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When we dedicate so much of our time and effort to the Clinic, we do so for the sake of our clients, whether this is an individual or an organisation, and community. These prizes are a valuable acknowledgment of all the work and effort that we put in when doing this!



Shann Jalaly, Dr Omar Madhloom, and Danica Custance.

Receiving awards for 'Best Overall Engagement', amongst other awards.

Prize Giving Event

By Shann Jalaly

Winners of Awards:

HJA and the Clinic Director's Award for Best Personal Contribution: Sophia Hamdan

Best Public Legal Education Team: JLAP: Malachi Eboda, Saleema Flynn and Mariam El Masmoudi Garcia

Prize for most outstanding contribution to the Newsletter: Akarsshaa Bhargava

Prize for best contribution to client care: Abigail McDonald Woods and Louis Austin

Best overall engagement: Shann Jalaly and Danica Custance

Prize for additional volunteered out of hours: Maria McRobb-Roldan

Prize for Best Overall Client Case Work: Olivia Stanco and Julia Peer

Best Contribution by a 1st year: Jacob Dolendo Hernandez

Best Contribution by a 2nd year: Akarsshaa Bhargava

Best Contribution by a final year: Nora Belkhiter

Student Advisor's Award for Best Personal Contribution: Danica Custance

Best Team Collaboration: Montpelier: Shann Jalaly, Martha Fiske and Olivia Witczak

Outstanding dedication to promoting the clinic: Lizzie Brooke, Holly Gould, Isabelle Casey and Ioannis Thomas

Best Contribution by a newcomer: Aidan Keogh

Prize Giving Event

By Shann Jalaly



Ioannis Thomas, Dr Omar Madhloom, Holly Gould, and Lizzie Brooke.

Receiving awards for 'Outstanding Dedication to Promoting the Clinic'.



The 2025 Legal Clinic Committee- Danica Custance, Amelia Tate, Saleema Flynn, Maddy Nicholl, Eurie New, Ioannis Thomas, Malachi Eboda, Sophia-Ada Hamdan, Lizzie Brooke, Holly Gould.

With Dan Denton, from Hodge Jones and Allen (our sponsors) in the middle

Prize Giving Event

By Shann Jalaly



Dan Denton (from Hodge Jones and Allen (our amazing sponsors)) and Ioannis Thomas

Ioannis receiving the award for 'Outstanding Dedication to Promoting the Clinic'.

Dan Denton (from Hodge Jones and Allen (our amazing sponsors)) and Jacob Dolendo Hernandez

Jacob receiving the award for 'Best Contribution by a 1st Year'.



Dan Denton (from Hodge Jones and Allen (our amazing sponsors)) and ... Malachi Eboda, and Sophia-Ada Hamdan

Malachi receiving the award for 'Best Public Legal Education Team' (alongside Saleema Flynn and Mariam Garcia).

Sophia receiving the award for 'HJA and the Clinic Director's Award for Best Personal Contribution'.



Legal Clinic Internship

By Maria McRobb-Roldan

My internship at the Global Legal Clinic was an incredibly valuable hands-on experience that really sped up my development as a future solicitor. Juggling several cases at once taught me crucial time management and organisational skills, and it also gave me exposure to a wide range of legal areas. Mentoring newer students was especially rewarding; it not only solidified my own grasp of legal concepts but also helped me hone my leadership abilities. Regular client interviews boosted my confidence in communicating and showed me how to ask the right questions to get to the heart of a case. While I was initially a bit nervous about talking to clients, I soon grew more comfortable handling sensitive subjects and explaining complicated legal matters in plain language. Reviewing contracts sharpened my eye for detail and analytical thinking, as I learned to spot potential problems and draft precise wording. The clinic's collaborative atmosphere meant I felt comfortable asking for help when I needed it, all while taking on more responsibility for case outcomes.

This experience truly bridged the gap between what I learned in lectures and how it applies in practice, giving me a proper taste of legal work. The mix of mentoring, varied cases, and direct client contact created a well-rounded learning environment that built both my practical skills and my professional self-assurance.

Montpellier Clinic

By Shann Jalaly

In April and May, I worked remotely on a case with La Clinique Juridique du Montpellier as part of an ongoing student exchange. The case involved property law, and having studied some elements of this in my land law module, I could make direct comparisons between both legal systems.

I began by understanding the French legal hierarchy and researching the status of each form of law such as ordinary legislation and civil codes (lois ordinaires and codes civils). Next, I used Legifrance to research the advice, which required me to become familiar with multiple areas of property law which I have not encountered in English law. It also required me to become familiar with yet another legal database – a valuable skill in itself!

Beyond the different legal systems, I found that the greatest difference arose when drafting the letter of advice. When working with clients in the UK, letters tend to be short and concise. In this letter, there was a section devoted to summarised advice and answering the client's questions, but much of it was devoted to substantive discussion of the law. I understand the value of this approach and the philosophy underpinning it, because this enables the client to access the summarised advice and then read through the same law that we did to understand why this advice was given.

I am especially grateful to the team in Montpellier for making me feel included, and for their understanding especially when I could not attend the final client meeting due to exams. This case taught me a great deal about French law, legal drafting in another language, and most importantly allowed me to develop cross-cultural skills which are necessary for any lawyer in the 21st century.

Attorney General's Pro Bono Committee

By Jake Dolendo Hernandez

I applied to attend the Regional and Attorney-General's Pro Bono Committees because I wanted to see how the Hampshire & Isle of Wight Pro Bono Committee was promoting access to justice within the region, and to learn from others—such as the Birmingham Law Society and the Pro Bono Committees of Greater Manchester, North East, West of England, and Yorkshire—all equally committed to this cause.

Having the opportunity to meet with other regional committees at Gray's Inn, alongside Maddy Nicholl, was an inspiring and rewarding experience. As a student, I initially felt out of place surrounded by legal experts and professionals. However, my involvement in several of the Legal Clinic's initiatives—through which I've developed legal skills and supported local Pro Bono efforts—helped ground me. That said, it can be difficult to recognise the full impact of such initiatives when you're in the midst of them, especially while balancing academic responsibilities.



Jacob Dolendo Hernandez and Maddy Nicholl

When Dr Omar Madhloom shared the Committee's work over the past year, the response from other regional committees was incredibly positive. Many expressed interest in adopting the same initiatives. It was encouraging to see that the work I had been involved in was not only beneficial to the Hampshire and Isle of Wight Pro Bono Community but also inspiring other pro bono committees in other regions to implement similar projects and broaden access to justice.

Attorney General's Pro Bono Committee

By Jake Dolendo Hernandez



Attorney General's Pro Bono Committee

It was equally inspiring to hear how law firms, charities, and legal services are promoting access to justice in their own unique ways. While at the Attorney General's Pro Bono Committee at the Houses of Parliament, it was fascinating to hear how organisations are collaborating to map legal deserts, identify where services are most needed, and work to address existing gaps in the current framework.

In my Law modules, like Legal Skills and Reasoning, I often heard professors discuss the challenges facing pro bono work in the UK and propose theoretical solutions. To move from the classroom into a room filled with organisations actively tackling these issues—and to be part of that effort—was both exciting and humbling.

For any Clinic Advisors looking to gain invaluable experience, I cannot recommend attending future events like this highly enough. Having the chance to contribute to projects that could help shape the future of Pro Bono work in the UK is a humbling, honourable, and exceptionally rare opportunity.

Hampshire Law Society Annual Dinner and Awards

By Maria McRobb-Roldan

It is rare to be given the opportunity to network with successful barristers, solicitors and judges at the same event. I applied to go to the Hampshire Law Society annual dinner because I noticed in my work in the Clinic there are certain barriers to justice that organisations like Citizens Advice also face. Increasing cuts to legal aid and harshness towards awarding benefits have meant that often the people who are most in need of legal aid cannot afford it. So, they rely on pro bono clinics and projects for legal advice, but the help they receive is often limited.

I was able to ask different professionals about their views on this and how different aspects of a legal claim have been impacted. From whether a client can contact a solicitor to whether they have to represent themselves in court and the inevitable delays the court faces. Different professionals had different views, based on their own work and experience, which begs the question of what the solution is. It is clear there is a problem, but it is not necessarily clear what the solution is.

That night I had an unforgettable experience, and I hope to maintain the connections I made. I did not expect to see many familiar faces there, including a judge who had recently ruled in a case I had been involved in. If given the opportunity to go again, I would happily go because of how useful it was for me, as I begin my career in law. The invaluable advice I received alongside how events like this can lead to doors being opened to opportunities you might not have thought was possible.

Hampshire Law Society Annual Dinner and Awards

By Maria McRobb-Roldan



Maria McRobb-Roldan, Maddy Nicholl, and Louis Austin

It was an honour to accept, on behalf of the Clinic, the award for the Best Pro Bono Contribution in the Hampshire Law Society Annual Awards 2025, alongside Maddy Nicholl, Louis Austin, and Sana Haj Mohamed. To be nominated, let alone to win, emphasises the important impact the Clinic is having to help improve the lives of the people in Hampshire and further. The many awards the Clinic has been nominated for or has won is a tribute to the hard work Dr Omar Madhloom has put into it, alongside every member who has worked in the Clinic in the last two years.