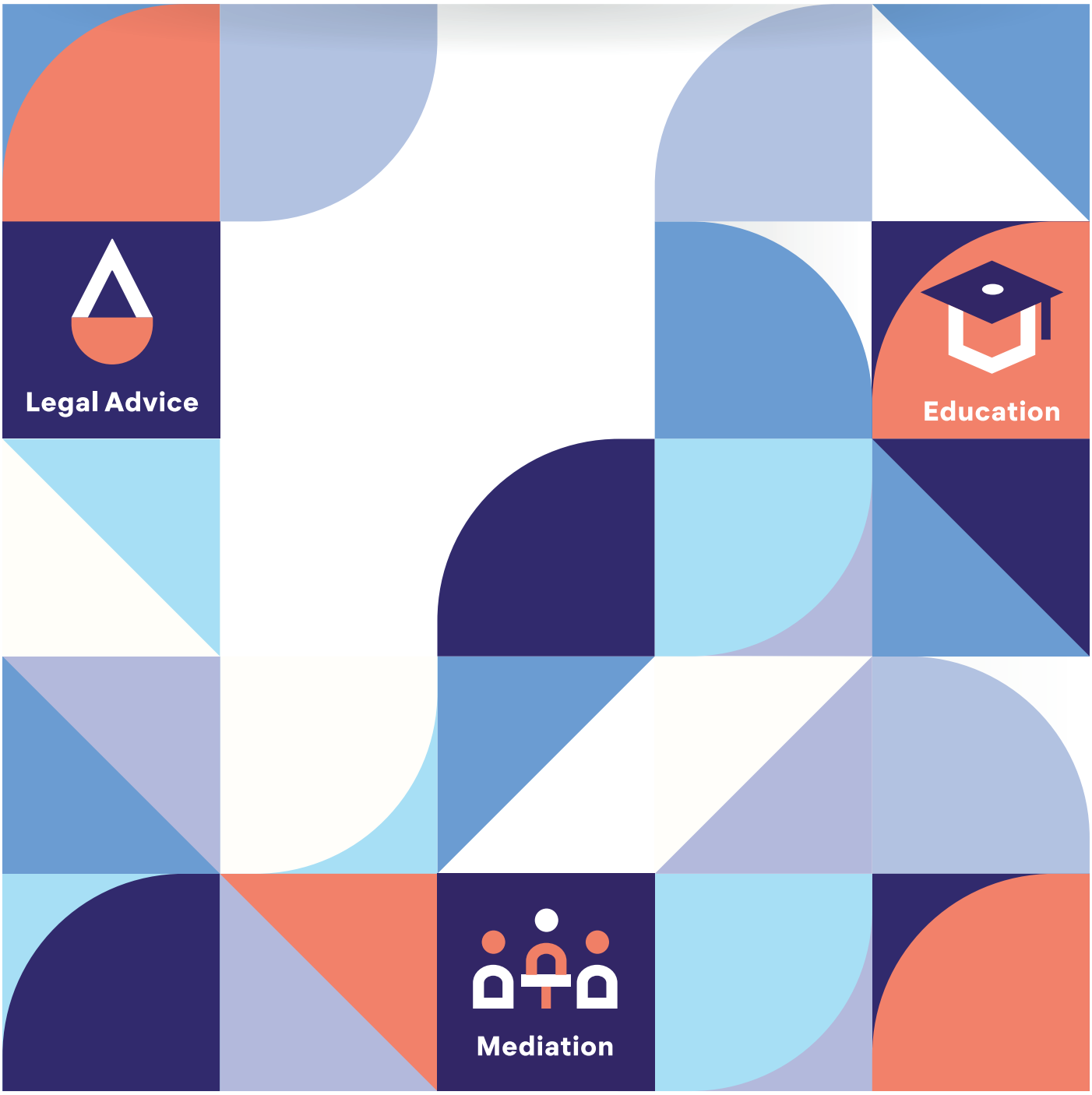
Ballymun Community Law Centre

Strategic Plan 2024-2027



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About Ballymun Community Law Centre

Ballymun Community Law Centre was established in 2002 to tackle unmet legal need in Ballymun. The Law Centre has been granted Independent Law Centre status by the Law Society of Ireland and operates as an independent not-for-profit community organisation. We aim to empower individuals to achieve equality and realise their human rights through increased access to the law.

Governed by a voluntary board of directors, the Law Centre is a registered charity and a company limited by guarantee. Our work is delivered by staff and volunteers and is currently largely funded by Dublin City Council and the Law Society of Ireland. The Law Centre is also assisted by individual members of the Law Library, the Law Society, and other professionals expert in their field.

CHAIRPERSON'S INTRODUCTION

As the newly appointed Chair of Ballymun Community Law Centre, I am delighted to welcome the publication of the Law Centre's Strategic Plan 2024 – 2027, which outlines how the Law Centre will continue to deliver and enhance our services to address unmet legal need and facilitate access to justice for the people of Ballymun.

What better way to start a strategic planning process than a look back at your history and a reminder of why you do the work you do? Last year, Ballymun Community Law Centre celebrated 21 years of community law in the heart of Ballymun. We held an event in Ballymun and reflected on the early days of the Law Centre and its development over the years, marvelling at all of the many people who have been involved and admiring their passion for our mission. We now go into the term of this new strategic plan acknowledging we are working in a challenging funding environment, but feeling energised from the support we receive here in the community in Ballymun and across the legal community, and in the knowledge that our work is making a real difference to the lives of people in Ballymun.

The Dublin City Council Ballymun Social Regeneration Fund has been a critical funder of the Law Centre over the years, awarding grants to carry out programmes across our three distinct services and we are very thankful for their ongoing support. We are also very grateful to the Law Society of Ireland for their annual donation courtesy of solicitors' voluntary contributions. Unfortunately, Dublin City Council have indicated that the grant cannot be relied on year on year and that we must ensure that we secure alternative mainstream funding. Part of our strategic planning for the coming years involves securing sustainable funding to continue our work; this will be critical to our ongoing operations.

One of the most rewarding aspects of being a Ballymun specific service is our sense of connectedness with the community of people and services that we work alongside here in Ballymun. In the post pandemic period we focused on re-establishing links with other services in the area. We made a concentrated effort to go meet with teams across Ballymun, to spot collaboration opportunities and to see where we can help with some of the great work already going on in the community. In this plan we now want to bed that partnership and collaboration approach into our work, ensuring that our services are shaped by the needs of the community and are accessible to all. The Legal Aid Board opening in Ballymun at the start of this plan will bring further opportunities for collaboration and partnership that we look forward to exploring.

We are inspired by the young people of Ballymun and look forward to our annual Peer Mediation course with primary school students and our Law Club with secondary school students. We believe there is further potential in this area and are committed to expanding our services to reach more young people, equipping them with knowledge of their rights and with conflict resolution skills.

We placed a renewed energy on governance over the last few years to ensure that we are fully compliant with the Charities Governance Code. We have a strong and skilled board, and new financial reporting procedures meaning we head into this new strategic plan in a strong position in what can often be a difficult regulatory environment for a small charity. Thanks to the board of directors of the Law Centre, giving their time and expertise to ensuring that we are well governed.

As incoming Chairperson in 2024, the year we embark on this new plan, I am filled with optimism about the opportunities ahead of us and I want to thank the team in the Law Centre and all of the volunteers who make it possible for our community Law Centre to have such a big impact.

Paula Reynolds

Paula Reynolds
Chairperson,
Ballymun Community Law Centre.

CELEBRATING 21 YEARS OF COMMUNITY LAW IN BALLYMUN

Pictured at the 21st event in 2023 L-R

Frank Murphy, board member and volunteer; Catherine Hickey, former Chairperson, addressing the attendees; and Minister Roderick O'Gormon with local woman and High Court Registrar Alice Walsh, both of whom spoke at the event.

PURPOSE

OUR VISION

Our vision is for an inclusive community based on the principles of equality and social justice, where the people of Ballymun have access to justice and the law as a human right.

OUR MISSION

Our mission is to empower the community of Ballymun to exercise their rights and achieve social justice and equality. To do this we provide accessible legal, educational, and alternative dispute resolution services.

CORE VALUES

We are an independent community organisation committed to increasing access to the law. To meet this commitment our work is delivered with the following core values:

Equality

We believe everyone should have access to justice and we work to remove barriers and create a fairer society.

Integrity

We are transparent and accountable in all of our actions.

Independence

We maintain independence in legal matters, ensuring decisions and actions are guided solely by the pursuit of justice and the best interests of clients and the community.

Community

We take pride in belonging to the community of Ballymun valuing the local strengths and potential. Community engagement shapes the Law Centre services and promotion of access to justice.

Partnership

We are committed to fostering collaboration and forming meaningful partnerships in order to achieve greater impact and success.

OUR SERVICES

Legal services	Legal education and training	Alternative Dispute Resolution Services and training
• Legal information and advice helpline including appropriate onward referral • Legal information and advice outreach clinics • Legal advocacy for clients, e.g. letter writing • Case work including client representation in court, at WRC, at RTB and in social welfare appeals • Targeted policy and law reform advocacy	• Regular introductory courses to areas of Irish Law • QQI accredited family law and advocacy course • Law talks at lunchtime and evenings with guest speakers on a variety of legal topics • Law Club – 12-week course on law for young people, including a mock trial	• Promotion of mediation as a concept for dispute resolution in Ballymun • Mediation casework with accredited mediators • 1:1 conflict coaching sessions • Accredited mediation education, training and ongoing learning • Peer mediation training for primary school students

Legal Services

The Law Centre provides legal advice and representation in areas of civil law not provided for under the Civil Legal Aid scheme. We provide this legal assistance based on the unmet need that we see in Ballymun, with most of our work being in the areas of housing; employment; debt; consumer; equality; health; and social welfare. We operate a model based on need as opposed to one based on merit or income; seeking to maximise access to justice for the people of Ballymun.

Legal Education

Our legal education programme exists to facilitate greater community legal knowledge and to support the progression of Ballymun residents into the legal professions. Our courses aim to make the law accessible to all, increase community awareness of alternative dispute resolution solutions to conflict and to encourage people in Ballymun to access the law and further legal education.

Alternative Dispute Resolution Services

We offer Alternative Dispute Resolution services to build dispute resolution skills in the community. Our Alternative Dispute Resolution are delivered by a core team of qualified volunteer mediators who provide Mediation, Conflict Coaching, and a Peer Mediation programme. Mediation can help to resolve disputes quickly and effectively, serving as an alternative to litigation by empowering people to come to an agreement on the way forward; Conflict Coaching helps people, on a structured one to one basis, develop their skills to effectively manage interpersonal conflict; while our Peer Mediation programme in local schools helps children develop problem-solving techniques which they can use to reduce conflict.

STRATEGIC AIMS 2024-2027

Strategic Aims

1. **Through collaboration and partnership develop our legal services so that we continue to respond to the unmet legal needs of the community.**

2. **Increase take up across Ballymun of alternative dispute resolution services.**

3. **Foster greater engagement in legal education initiatives within the Ballymun community.**

4. **Ensure long term financial, environmental, and social sustainability of the Law Centre.**

STRATEGIC AIM 1

Through collaboration and partnership develop our legal services so that we continue to respond to the unmet legal needs of the community.

Strategic Objectives

1.1	Continue to meet the legal needs of the community by maintaining the legal services currently in place and monitor for new and emerging areas of unmet legal need.
1.2	Continue to develop an onward referral system for case work outside of the capacity of the Law Centre in order to increase the numbers of clients who can access legal representation in matters outside of the Civil Legal Aid scheme.
1.3	Establish a consultative forum and/or channels with the people of Ballymun through which to identify areas to collaboratively advocate for positive policy change.
1.4	Explore ways to raise awareness of the Law Centre's services, build greater connections and further extend service reach to minority groups within the community.
1.5	Explore with the Legal Aid Board the possibility of joint initiatives aimed at promoting the availability of legal services to those who might not be easily able to access them.
1.6	Continue to explore partnerships and collaboration opportunities with other services in Ballymun and pilot a new programme in partnership with one other organisation aimed at meeting an unmet legal need.

STRATEGIC AIM 2

Increase the uptake of Alternative Dispute Resolution services by Ballymun residents.

Strategic Objectives

2.1	Expand the Peer Mediation programme so that it is offered to all primary schools in Ballymun.
2.2	Assess the demand for the Alternative Dispute Resolution services on offer and the impact of them, with consideration for what the best use of the Law Centre's resources are to meet the dispute resolution needs of the community.
2.3	Review the current training programme with a view to continuing the delivery of an Alternative Dispute Resolution training programme in the community that best meets its needs.
2.4	Increase utilisation of Alternative Dispute Resolution Services among Ballymun residents.
2.5	Drive continuous quality improvement measures, ensuring appropriate policies and procedures are in place and that Alternative Dispute Resolution volunteers have the skills, experience, training and supports to deliver the service.
2.6	Continue to develop partnerships with other service providers in Ballymun to promote the Law Centre's Alternative Dispute Resolution services and to create referral pathways.

STRATEGIC AIM 3

Foster greater engagement in legal education initiatives within the Ballymun community.

Strategic Objectives

3.1	Sustain the current legal education programme and ensure its ongoing viability.
3.2	Develop and trial new courses for the community based on the research feedback.
3.3	Increase collaboration with local community education providers and explore opportunities to integrate legal education elements into existing courses in the community.
3.4	Scope the potential to deliver a project focusing on young people's participation in law making.
3.5	Expand the reach of the Law Club for young people in Ballymun.
3.6	Continue to develop pathways to provide work experience in legal settings to transition year students in Ballymun through partnerships with legal firms.

STRATEGIC AIM 4

Ensure the long term financial, environmental and social sustainability of the Law Centre.

Strategic Objectives

4.1	Develop a funding strategy that seeks to diversify funding sources, secure the ongoing operations of the Law Centre and build capacity for future growth.
4.2	Maintain compliance with the Charities Governance Code and the Charities SORP, ensuring high standards of governance, accounting and reporting.
4.3	Develop an environmental policy setting out the actions by which the Law Centre commits to sustainable operations and reducing our impact on the environment.
4.4	Develop a communications strategy for the Law Centre in order to better profile the Centre within the Ballymun community and also with potential stakeholder groups and strategic partners.
4.5	Continue to develop the quality systems in place across services, working to established quality standards and best practice guidelines, ensuring staff are trained and supported in their roles and that policies and procedures are up to date.
4.6	Demonstrate the impact of the Law Centre within a recognised model or framework and develop systems to measure and report on impact on an ongoing basis.
4.7	Review the staffing arrangements within the Law Centre with a view to maximising capability, with the review to include the potential for an intern/trainee placement programme.

MONITORING PROGRESS

A comprehensive monitoring framework will be implemented to oversee the delivery and monitor the progress of the strategic plan.

This will consist of:

- **An annual workplan** derived from the Strategic Plan objectives, with shared and individual goals for the Ballymun Community Law Centre team. This will be reviewed quarterly as a team and individually on a regular basis through action plans.
- **A schedule of reporting** which will be developed for the board of directors of Ballymun Community Law Centre to monitor the progress of the implementation of the objectives and address challenges.
- **A system of impact measurement** will be developed to measure the overall success of the aims within the plan.

Ballymun Community Law Centre

Unit 1A Shangan Neighbourhood Centre,
Shangan Road, Ballymun, Dublin 9, D09 F954.

T: + 353 (0) 1 862 5805

W: www.bclc.ie

E: info@bclc.ie

/ballymuncommunitylawcentre

@Ballymun_Law

Ballymun Community Law Centre

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Supported by:

Comhairle Cathrach Bhaile Átha Cliath
Dublin City Council

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