

employees. Most of our recent courses have examined the role that the European Convention can play in specialist areas of law, such as prisoners' rights, public order, immigration, media law, employment and criminal law.

One of the most effective and efficient ways for Liberty to inform professionals about the implications of human rights law in their area of practice is to address members at their own meetings and events. In September 1997, Liberty's Director, John Wadham, led a workshop on incorporation at the National Association of Citizens Advice Bureaux annual conference and also addressed the annual conference of HIV/AIDS organisations; in July 1998, he spoke on incorporation to over 600 delegates at Victim Support's Annual Conference. During the project, Liberty has also organised or contributed to a variety of in-house training programmes. For instance, in December 1997, we led a workshop for people involved in the criminal justice system, mainly probation officers, at an event organised by the Romily Association in Reading.

This autumn, we are launching a series of short courses, which build directly on the initiatives described above, for non-governmental organisations on the implications of incorporation

in their specific field of work. For example, there will be sessions on public order and protest, freedom of expression, criminal justice, policing and prisoners' rights, as well as on asylum and immigration, disability and children's rights. The programme includes training days, specifically aimed at advice workers, on the rights protected under the convention and the relevant mechanisms for redress.

The project has enabled Liberty to achieve much, devising and delivering training for voluntary sector advice workers in different areas of work and across different parts of the country. Our intention now is to organise a more extensive, nationwide programme of training, building what we hope will be a sustainable network of training, advice and exchange at all levels between Liberty, other specialist NGOs, lawyers and voluntary and community organisations.

FURTHER DETAILS

For further information about this project, please contact Mr Jonathan Hardy, Development Officer, Liberty, 21 Tabard St., London SE1 4LA (Tel: 0171 403 3888)

'Hamlyn Trust Scholarships' for community legal education and training

Report by the Legal Services Agency, Glasgow

The Legal Services Agency (LSA), Scotland's National Law Centre, is a charity and public service organisation which advertises its services throughout Scotland. Its objectives are to assist all disadvantaged persons in Scotland by undertaking casework to a high volume and quality, by conducting legal research and by providing legal education and training. Membership is open to any tenants' group, community organisation or charitable organisation located in Scotland, and all members are entitled to nominate candidates to the Board of Directors and to vote at the annual general meeting. In short, the agency is an independent 'user-controlled' community law centre, currently serving approximately 400 voluntary, charitable and community groups throughout Scotland. The agency has offices in Glasgow and Edinburgh, with a combined staff of 19.

The grant of £5,000 from the Hamlyn Trust was designed to support the agency's work in providing 'community legal education' throughout Scotland. LSA is Scotland's leading community legal training and education organisation. Since its inception, now nearly 10 years ago, over 25,000 delegates have benefited from LSA's work. LSA can claim through its work to have developed a number of key areas of social welfare law in a fashion that has been to a high standard, but at a pretty low cost.

As a law centre employing nine solicitors, LSA is aware of the need to develop new remedies in the areas of mental health law, social security, employment, anti-discrimination, housing, rights of victims of violence, to name but a few. In spite of the low costs of LSA's seminars (generally around half the cost of relevant competitors) LSA is aware that many community organisations, charities and advice agencies, particularly outwith the 'Central Belt' of Scotland, are unable to afford to come to many of our events. In order to encourage involvement LSA

employed the grant from the Hamlyn Trust to provide 'Hamlyn Trust Scholarships' designed to make it more financially viable for a wider range of delegates to attend LSA training or education events. The Scholarships were particularly aimed at individuals who could pass on their knowledge to others by way of information or skills 'cascade'.

The launch event for the scholarships was LSA's bi-annual Social Welfare Law two or three day conference. This took place in the autumn of 1997 and the 'take-up' of scholarship applications was so high that over £2,000 of the grant was put to use in relation to this one event alone. But the availability of this financial assistance meant that there was a much wider range of delegates than would otherwise have been the case.

Other events which were particularly popular include LSA's *Employment Law* course (where 20% of the delegates received concessionary places supported by the Hamlyn Trust) and a major conference on *Criminal Injuries Compensation and Defending Evictions*.

It is not normally financially viable for LSA's staff to travel elsewhere to give training events; but the assistance of the Trust meant that a number of training events have taken place elsewhere, most recently for instance in Kilwinning and, in the autumn of this year, a conference on *Elderly Care and the Law* will take place in Ayr.

Overall the experiment has shown that there is a demand for high quality training events which quite small organisations are prepared to attend if the price can be made acceptable. LSA now proposes to build on this successful experiment by taking up the particular challenge posed by the massive changes in employment law and social welfare law which seem likely to follow 'domestication' of the European Convention on Human Rights.

During the past year approximately 10% of all the delegates at all LSA training events received subsidy as a consequence of the Hamlyn Trust award. The effectiveness of the award can therefore be in no doubt! LSA's only problem now will be in dealing with disappointed applicants in the future should comparable awards or grants not be forthcoming.

FURTHER DETAILS

For further information about this project, please contact Mr Paul D Brown, Principal Solicitor, Legal Services Agency Ltd, Fleming House, 134 Renfrew St, Glasgow G3 6ST (Tel: 0141 353 3354)

UK Law Online: the legal system on the Internet

Report by Professor Clive Walker and Mr Yaman Akdeniz, Centre for Criminal Justice Studies, the University of Leeds

Recent research has confirmed that very little legal information is readily accessible to the citizen in the street. But the Internet, with its direct and continuous access to the general public, provides a wholly new opportunity for dealing with this problem. Accordingly, the main object of this project is to raise public awareness, appreciation and understanding of the English, Scots and Northern Ireland legal systems through the medium of the Internet. For this purpose, we have created a world-wide web site especially designed to provide important legal material in a comprehensible way.

The project commenced on 1 September 1997, and the creation of the initial site was undertaken almost immediately. Contact was made with other legal Internet users, in particular the CTI at Warwick, the Law Society and a very wide range of law discussion lists. The web sites of the Lord Chancellor's Department and Butterworths now have direct links to *UK Law Online*.

Work then began on the writing and formatting for web purposes, of materials in relation to the subject-areas outlined above, the first stage of which is expected to be completed by October 1998. As the substance of the pages has taken shape, we have sought to obtain feedback from our audiences, in particular by establishing links with local schools and further education establishments. Ideally, we would like to create an advisory or contact group, but have so far had a disappointing response to our many invitations to participate. For the longer term, contacts with citizens' advice bureaux and public libraries are also planned.

To date, we have concentrated upon two main areas:

- (1) **The legal system** – These pages provide a basic but very accessible description of the types and sources of laws and the structure of the courts. In substance, the description is unremarkable – similar information is provided by many law text-books. What is important is that our pages are written in non-technical terms which a wider audience may follow, are available on the web and are unique in the detail which that medium allows for links to other sources – and thereby further research. The information on the English legal system which we provide is now substantial, and we have recently added a great deal of materials and links on the European Union.
- (2) **News topics** – One special feature designed to attract the attention of both groups of potential users was to be a special section dealing with current legal issues such as pending legislation, proposals and cases which draw the attention of the public in newspapers and television. These pages are linked to UK on-line newspapers such as *The Times*, *The Guardian* and *The Daily Telegraph* and to the government and Parliamentary servers.

Our original plans also called for monthly updating of current events coverage. However this activity was found to be too time-consuming and also not as informative as we would wish. So we have instead concentrated upon more occasional but in-depth studies. The first such item was the story of Princess Diana and the treatment of privacy in law. The second concerned devolution to Scotland and Wales.

on the internet

<http://www.leeds.ac.uk/law/hamlyn/>

To further explore the work of UK Law Online visit the above web site.

Users of our web site have direct access to a legal team by electronic mail. But the project is not intended for individual legal advice; rather we offer generalised legal information and seek to improve public comprehension of important legal issues. We do this by creating a series of world wide web pages which allow us to provide legal information in accessible, alluring and attractive formats, with graphics, pictures and references and links to further sources of information. These pages are aimed primarily at non-lawyers, especially school students, but they also include some detailed information which is likely to be of value to more professional users such as lawyers, law students, academics, researchers, and journalists.

By the end of next year, the main subject headings will be as follows:

- The Legal System: Organisation of the Courts; the Legal Professions and Organisations; Statute Law and Parliament;
- European Law: the European Union; the European Convention on Human Rights;
- Criminal Justice: Criminal trials; Sentencing; Young Offenders; Legal Aid;
- Civil Justice: Proceedings in Courts and Tribunals; Appeals; Judicial Review; Legal Aid; Small Claims;
- Informal Justice: Ombudsmen; Citizen's Charter;
- Civil Liberties: Police and the Citizen; Sex Discrimination; Broadcasting Standards Commission; Press Complaints Commission;
- Current events: Current Legal Issues in the News;
- Contract and Tort Law: Claims for Breach of Contract; Compensation for Accidental Injury.