

Suffolk
Law
Centre

Impact Report

2024-25

Providing access to specialist legal help for the community.

Published
November 2025

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This report is dedicated to the individuals and families we support, whose resilience inspires us every day.

Thank you to our volunteers, partners, and supporters for making access to justice possible.

Our Staff in 2024-25

- **Alex Varadeu** – Legal Triage Officer (to July 2024)
- **Audrey Ludwig** – Director of Legal Services (to October 2024)
- **Carol Ward** – Family Solicitor
- **Colby Salam** – Family Paralegal
- **Jack Huzzey** – Digital and UX Coordinator
- **Jennie Bailey** – Billing Officer
- **Julie Baker** – Discrimination Law Caseworker
- **Kerry Bland** – Housing Solicitor (Locum)
- **Kisha Duhaney** – Legal Aid Admin Assistant
- **Lucy Davies** – Housing Court Duty Advisor
- **Paula Beaton** – Admin Officer: Triage
- **Richard Hinton** – Discrimination Solicitor
- **Rohan Raghavan** – Paralegal
- **Salma Zuberi** – Housing Solicitor
- **Sayed Muslimyan** – Office Manager (to June 2024)
- **Sharon Hewes-Lewington** – Family Law Caseworker
- **Sophie Steward** – Practice Manager (to April 2024)/Practice Director (from April 2024)
- **Sue Wardell** – Operations and Development Manager (to April 2024)/Director of Operations and Development (from April 2024)

We are pleased to present our **2024-2025 Impact Report**.

Suffolk Law Centre has had a busy year – we have seen some significant change, yet maintained services and made a huge **impact**, given our small size.

At the end of October 2024, Audrey Ludwig, founder of Suffolk Law Centre, stepped down from her position as Director of Legal Services and we were appointed co-Directors by the Board of Trustees.



During this year, we have responded to a number of **challenges** that have impacted on our capacity. This includes recruitment difficulties in our Housing team and reduced staffing due to long-term sickness and maternity leave (but this does mean we have a Suffolk Law Centre baby!). In spite of all of this, we are **so proud** of everything that our dedicated staff and volunteers have been able to achieve.

On the pages of this report, you will read some of the stories of impact in the case studies and the data that is **so much more than just numbers**. The impact that we have made on peoples' lives is significant – from supporting a parent in their struggle to have contact with their child, to getting a client off the streets and into a safe place to live, to reaching a settlement for a client who has been experiencing discrimination at work. All this, and more, is what Suffolk Law Centre does – none of it would be possible without the support of our funders, generous donors, pro bono legal volunteers, community partners and our brilliant Trustees.

As we work with the team to plan a sustainable future, we hope that you will continue to support us and will work collaboratively with us to find new ways to achieve access to justice for more people who need it.

Thank You.

Sophie Steward

Co-Director

Sue Wardell

Co-Director

SLC 2024-25 - Our Year in Data

686
Clients

~£1,000,000
estimated savings to government
from our free legal advice*

Over 60
Staff and Volunteers
across our services

Client Location

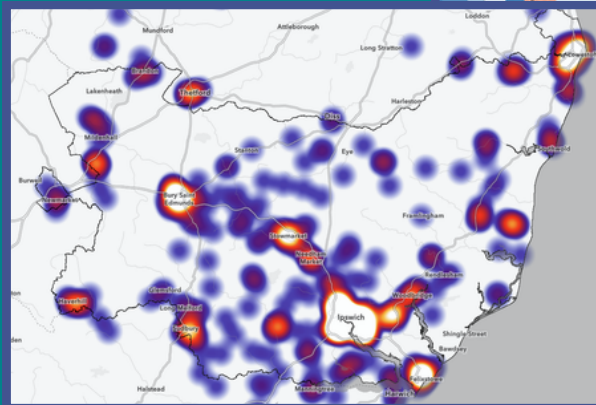
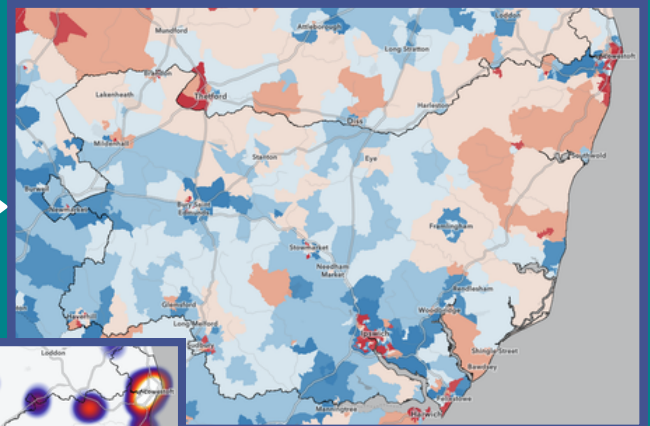
30% of our clients live in some of the most deprived areas of the country (Index of Multiple Deprivation 2025)

Top 5 local authority areas with the highest client representation:

Local Authority	2024-25
Ipswich	197
East Suffolk	142
West Suffolk	85
Mid Suffolk	67
Babergh	67

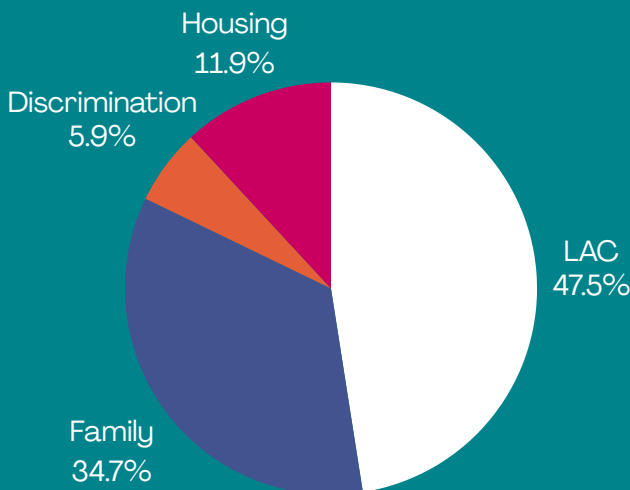
IMD 2025 Decile
Lower = More Deprived

- >8.3
- 5.5
- >2.7



Client Density
- High
- Low

Clients by Service



Client Demographics

88%
of our clients have a household income of less than £25,000 per year

41%
of our clients are aged between 35-49 years old

62%
of our clients are female

36%
of our clients identified as disabled or long-term sick in 2024-25

76%
of our clients are not in full time work or education

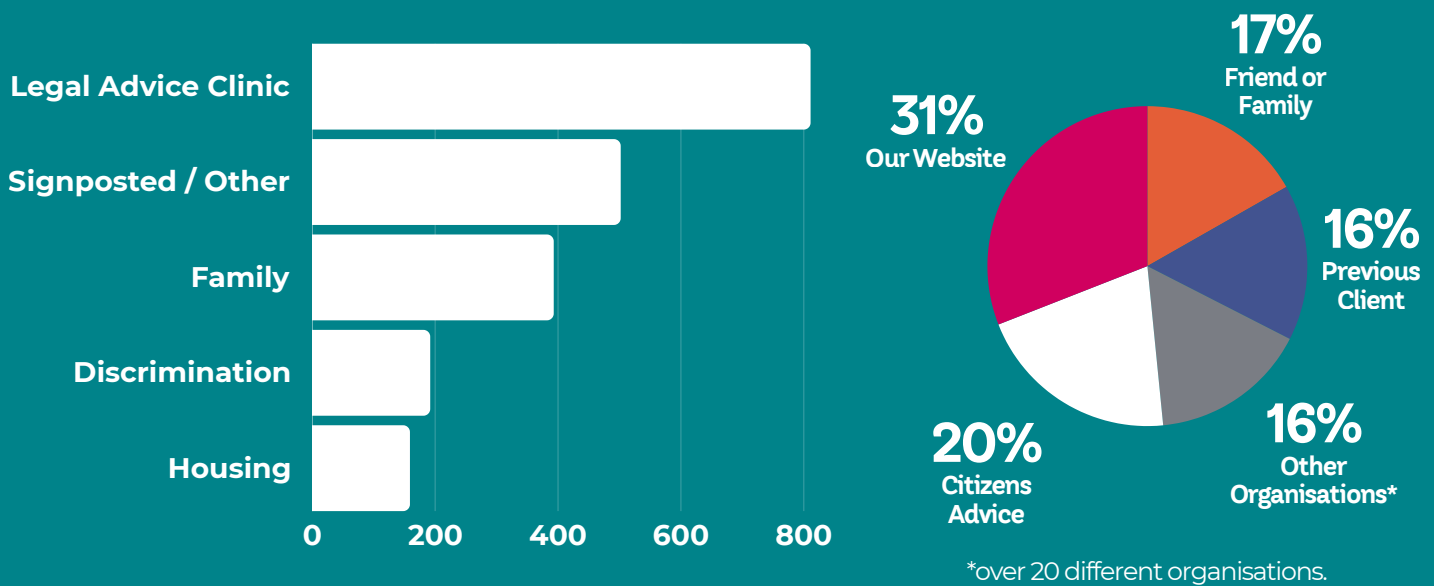
Enquiries and Triage

Enquiries

Our reception and triage team received 2031 initial enquiries in 2024-25. This has increased from 1664 enquiries in 2023-24.

The graph below shows how these enquiries were triaged: either to one of our casework teams or signposted to another source of help.

The below pie chart illustrates the sources through which people first heard about Suffolk Law Centre.



Legal Triage

Our Legal Triage service supports clients identified as having clustered or complex legal advice issues, helping to provide detailed, bespoke signposting to help them to find the right advice, and a follow-up 'wraparound' service for those who need it so that they can better understand and benefit from that advice.

183 clients were supported through Legal Triage in 2024-25. The Legal Triage post is funded by **Ipswich Borough Council**.

44% of our initial enquiries were from outside of Suffolk. While these may fall outside of our area, we still try to provide relevant signposting information to help with their issue.

This rise of demand reflects the lack of free specialist legal advice services across the country.



Discrimination Law

Our **Discrimination Team** provides free legal advice and assistance to people experiencing unlawful discrimination. We hold a Discrimination Legal Aid contract, which means we can also offer legal representation to those clients who are eligible for assistance under this funding.

IMPACT



35 Discrimination clients assisted in 2024-25

Of these, **12** were under our Discrimination Legal Aid contract.



Our discrimination clients were of all ages, ranging from

19 – 70
years old.



58%

of our discrimination clients identify as disabled or long-term sick



18%

of our discrimination clients have multiple health problems

Case Study

Issue: Client with Autism sought advice and representation in Employment Tribunal claim they had started against large national employer. They had a final hearing date, but they were really struggling to prepare for it. The stress was impacting on their mental wellbeing.

What We Did: We assisted them in the preparation for their final hearing and secured an advocate to represent them.

Outcome: By taking them on as a client, a huge amount of the stress in trying to manage the process themselves was lifted. They were able to regain their cognitive function and their mental health improved, giving them the confidence to effectively participate in the final hearing preparations. The client said this was the first time since the issues occurred at work they had been able to sleep and live their life without the stress and fear of the Employment Tribunal claim and possible loss of their job.

Discrimination Law Projects

Our **Join, Stay and Flourish** project is funded by **Law Centres Network** and the **Baring Foundation**. Based on our years of experience supporting neurodivergent people to navigate employment tribunals, we wanted to find a better way for them to understand and assert their legal rights.

Working with specialist support organisations and neurodivergent young people in Suffolk and North Essex to co-create an **Employment Rights ‘Hub’** providing employment rights information, links to other support, best practice and more – to assist both employees and their employers to understand how to avoid lengthy, stressful and costly litigation. And enable neurodivergent people to **Join, Stay and Flourish** at work.

IMPACT

As part of this project, we partnered with **Disability Advice and Welfare Network (DAWN)** to co-produce the Education Leavers Passport.

THANK YOU: We talked to many people to help develop this project, but special thanks to: Annie Sands and Luke Jackson from **Disability Advice and Welfare Network (DAWN)**; Annie Clements from **Autism and ADHD; East of England Co-op; Autism Action; Papworth Trust; University of Suffolk**; Emma Bates (**CE Law Centre**); Sue Lukes and Bella Kosmala.



Our **Suffolk Access to Justice** project is funded by the **Bell Foundation**, which aims to address the legal advice needs of Suffolk’s Roma communities, as well as other under-represented migrant communities, who speak no or little English. The first year of this 3-year project was a community engagement partnership with our founding charity, **Ipswich and Suffolk Council for Racial Equality (ISCRE)**, focused on mapping the needs of communities and identifying their trusted spaces.

IMPACT

We supported **12 clients** to understand and resolve their legal issues.

THANK YOU: Romeo Mustata from **Ipswich Romanian Community** for supporting some of our clients.

THANK YOU: Sharon & Travis from **ISCRE** for support in mapping community spaces and The Hive for hosting our advice sessions.

Discrimination - Actions Against Public Bodies



Julie Baker
Discrimination
Caseworker

Julie supports clients in taking actions against public authorities. Most clients need support in making formal complaints to the relevant Police Professional Standards Department.

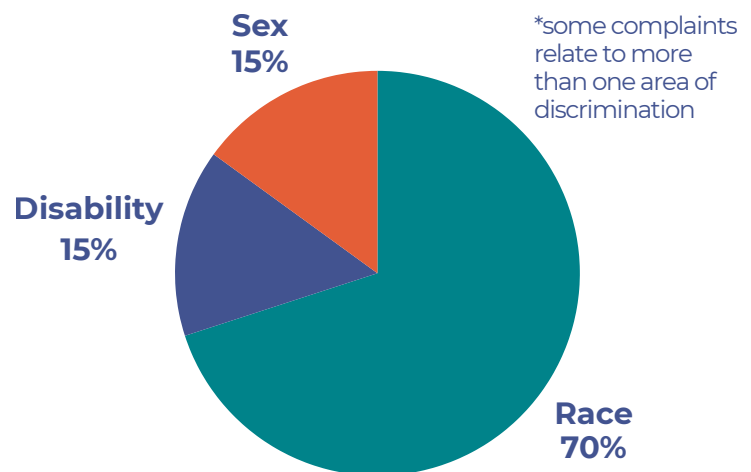
When these complaints have not been investigated adequately or proportionally, they are reviewed by the **Independent Office for Police Conduct (IOPC)**.

**16 cases, 7 of which
were new cases**

in the 2024-25
reporting year

13 cases went to the
**Independent Office for
Police Conduct (IOPC)**;
of these **9 were upheld**
during 2024-25.

Percentage Breakdown of Discrimination Complaints by Type*



Case Study

The issue: The client is a European national, unable to speak English. We spoke via a translator. The client had been arrested on an extremely serious criminal offence, was bailed for several months, and then Suffolk Constabulary decided no further action would be taken.

What we did: We submitted a formal police complaint to the Professional Standards Department of Suffolk Constabulary alleging race discrimination. The complaint handler's outcome determined that the service provided by Suffolk Constabulary was acceptable. We requested a review of this decision by the Independent Office for Police Conduct (IOPC).

Outcome: This complaint was upheld. The IOPC held that the complaint handler's investigation was not reasonable or proportionate and did not address the serious allegation of race discrimination.

Our Family teams provide expert legal advice and casework to people making an application to the Family Court in Private Children matters.

About our Family Law Services

We offer FREE advice and casework support across a range of family legal issues relating to **children**.

Family Support Clinic: One-off appointments with a volunteer Family law expert, providing information and guidance about the law relating to the client's issue and their next steps.

Family Casework: For more complex cases, or more vulnerable clients, to assist with their case in matters such as preparing position and witness statements, making applications to court, domestic abuse and care proceedings if the client is not eligible for legal aid.

Family Court Help Desk: a weekly information only service at Ipswich Magistrates' Court for people who are unrepresented in their Family matter. We offer reassurance about Court proceedings and information about our other services and other agencies.

Gender



69%

of our Family Law clients were Female

Value



£150,000

value of *free* legal work conducted in Family Law

Age



Our Family Law clients were aged between

18 – 69
years old.

SLC Family Casework



45,996 minutes
of Family Law casework conducted in 2024-25

Family Law

Impact in 2024-25



Family Support Clinic: 141 clients.

Family Court Helpdesk: 110 litigants in person.

Family Casework Service: 86 clients dealing with complex legal matters, 20 of whom were new clients in 2024-25.

Family Client Quote

“ You have been the most amazing support and have empowered me to get through. ”

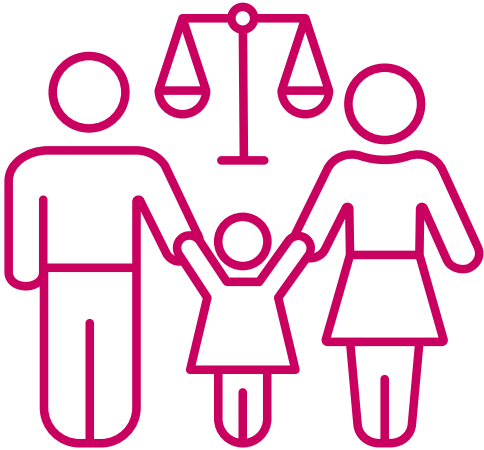


Family Case Study

Issue: Client is unable to read or write and is in poor health. They had not been able to have any contact with their child for several years, causing them significant distress and impacting on their health.

What We Did: We assisted the client with an application to Spend Time with their child. We prepared statements for court and supported them to prepare for the Hearing. Initially the court ordered supervised contact at a contact centre. The client was in receipt of benefits and unable to pay for this, so we used money from our Breakthrough Fund grant from Suffolk Community Foundation to assist them with the costs and liaised with the contact centre to set up the contact.

Outcome: Our client was able to have supervised sessions with their child, with very positive reports. Supported contact then took place in our client's home, and on closing our file, the client had rebuilt a good relationship with their ex-partner and was having frequent overnight and weekend contact with their child. Client said they could not have managed the process without our help.



Family Support Clinic Client Quote

“ I am now aware and clearer on next steps and feel more confident. I feel as though I can take one step at a time, rather than it feeling so daunting. THANK YOU! ”

Before and After FSC Appointment

We asked people to provide a score about **how confident that they felt for each of these statements** on a scale of 1 – 5, with 1 being **Low** and 5 being **High**.

“I know what my legal rights are.”



“I feel I have a say in legal decisions that affect me.”



“I know what legal options are available to me.”



“I know what my next steps should be to resolve my legal issues.”



Housing Law

Our Housing team provide a Housing legal advice and casework service to help prevent people from losing their home.

Down, But Not Out: An Access to Justice Story

Our Housing service had a bit of a rollercoaster year in 2024-25. Unfortunately, due to recruitment issues, we could not reapply for a new Housing Legal Aid contract at the end of **August 2024**. Huge thanks to **Kerry Bland, locum Housing Solicitor** who continued to support clients with ongoing cases so that they were not left without representation.

We approached the Courts and were granted permission to run an interim Housing Court Duty service at Bury St. Edmunds County Court which we started in **October**.

The same month, we also finally recruited to the **Housing Solicitor** post.

In **December 2024**, Wiltshire Law Centre secured the **Housing Loss Prevention Advice Scheme (HLPAS)** at Bury St. Edmunds County Court, having agreed a partnership with Suffolk Law Centre so that we could deliver the HLPAS contract as their local agent. We are immensely grateful to **Wiltshire Law Centre** for this generous initiative that enabled us to carry on rebuilding our Housing service.

Our Impact



59

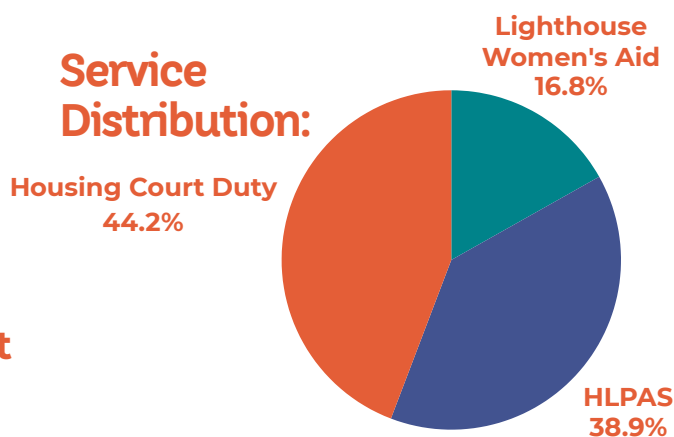
new Housing Law clients assisted in 2024-25

42 clients assisted at **Housing Court Duty** service at Bury St. Edmunds Courts.

Of these, **37** clients supported under **Housing Loss Prevention Advice Service (HLPAS)** which Suffolk Law Centre delivered as a local agent of Wiltshire Law Centre under their HLPAS contract.

16 clients advised through a telephone clinic for clients of **Lighthouse Women's Aid**.

Our Housing service has been funded by the Legal Education Foundation.



Age



Our Housing Law clients were aged between

21 – 81
years old.

“

I just wanted to thank you for your kindness and representation ... during a difficult time for me”

”

- Housing Client

Case Study

Issue: The council accepted our client and family for the main housing duty but offered a property which did not meet the family's needs. Our client felt they had no choice but to accept this unsuitable property. They needed help with asserting their rights to a review of this decision, as English was not their first language.

What we did: We requested disclosure of our client's housing file and identified, amongst other issues, that inadequate space had been provided to the family in contravention of the council's allocations policy. We assisted the client with submissions to support their request for a review of the property's suitability.

Outcome: The council decided to overturn the original decision that the property offered was suitable and agreed to make an alternative offer of accommodation to our client meeting the size criteria laid down in its allocation policy.

“

We just want to thank you again for representing us ... without you the outcome could quite possibly have been different, so thank you.

”

- Housing Client

Legal Advice Clinic (LAC)

About our Service

Our **Legal Advice Clinics (LAC)** offer initial legal advice to help people understand more about their legal issue and have more confidence to take their next steps.

This pro bono service is delivered with the generous support of legal professionals from local, regional and national law firms, volunteering their time and expertise.

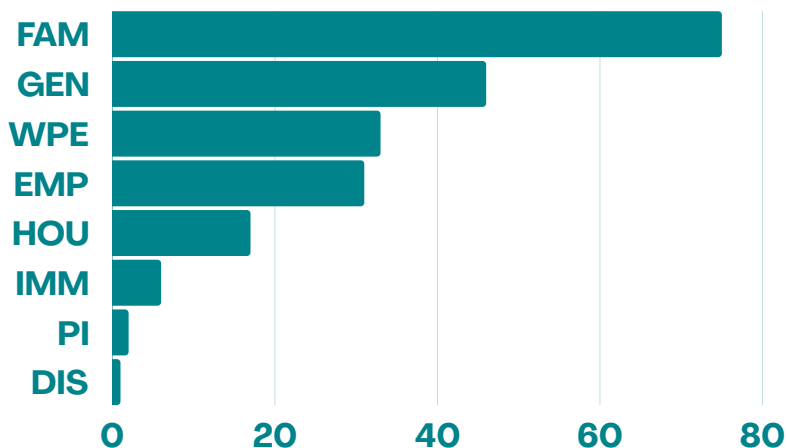
Clinics are run on a weekly basis, offering clients a **one-off 30-minute telephone appointment**. Over 2024-25, the LAC covered the following areas of law: *Discrimination; Employment; Family; Housing; Immigration; Wills and Probate, and a General Law Clinic.*

Our clients and areas of law

320

clients advised by
our LAC in 2024-25

Of these clients, see the chart to the right for their **distribution** between the areas of law we offer in our **Legal Advice Clinics**.



Volunteering with Suffolk Law Centre has given me the chance to make a meaningful contribution to my community while gaining hands-on experience in the private client sector. Supporting clients with matters concerning the estates of their loved ones has shown me the importance of combining legal knowledge with empathy, patience, and clear communication. These experiences have also helped me grow as a trainee solicitor, strengthening essential skills such as client interviewing and building confidence in navigating complex situations. Most importantly, it has shown me that even small contributions of time and expertise can make a real difference in people's lives



Olga Kyriakoudi
Trainee Solicitor
Greene and Greene

Our partners

THANK YOU: 'Thank You to our brilliant 30+ legal volunteers for supporting our Legal Advice Clinic - #ProBono'

Birketts LLP trainee solicitors under supervision advised 42 clients on General Law matters

A new partnership with the **Open University Law Clinic** advised 18 clients on Family Law matters.



3PB

Weil, Gotshal & Manges LLP

East Anglian Chambers

Case Study

Issue: The client was seeking legal advice on divorce and separation upon leaving an abusive relationship.

What we did: At their free, 30-minute Legal Advice clinic appointment, the client was given initial advice on finances considered during divorce proceedings and alternative ways to reach an agreement with the other party, such as mediation.

Outcome: "The free legal advice session I had was very helpful as it enabled me to understand how the courts are likely to view my situation so I could try to reach an agreement without incurring the cost of court. The person I spoke to was very nice, understanding and comforting. They listened and was very clear with advice. There were things they were unsure of so went away then confirmed their advice in an email. This was an invaluable service for me and I am very thankful." - *Client Family LAC*

Chair's Statement

Thank you for your interest in Suffolk Law Centre's **Impact Report 2024-25**.

Reading through these pages, I am struck by how much the numbers and case studies tell a wider story of the considerable impact that Suffolk Law Centre - a small specialist advice provider makes on peoples' lives. Law Centres reach many people who would otherwise neither be able to **afford** nor **access** the legal advice they need to solve their problems.

Clearly the need for legal advice in civil matters is on the **increase**. The number and nature of the enquiries we receive is evidence of this.

Firstly, a huge **THANK YOU** to all our staff for the incredible job they do.

To our community volunteers who supported our services in 2024-25: Abi Ward; Anne Richards; Carole Parry-Jones; Clare Free; David Brown; Dee Stewart; Glenda Terry; Jemima Chinoko; Krystyna Hayes; Lola Hinton-Barnett; Paul Burton; Tharika Dishani.

To our funders: AB Charitable Trust; Access to Justice Foundation; Baring Foundation; Bell Foundation; Ipswich Borough Council; Law Centres Network; Legal Education Foundation Suffolk Community Foundation; Suffolk County Council; Tudor Trust.

To those who made donations to our work in 2024-25– your generosity is hugely valued:

Sharon Hewes-Lewington; Monica Kurnatowska; Eleanor Root; David and Margaret Anderson; William Clegg; The Unruly Pig Co; Ed Hall; C M Hathaway; Gareth Thomas; Pamela Matthews' Charitable Trust; Dean Thompson; Graeme Ludwig; Russell Wells; Alice H Palmer; Adam Signy

Many thanks to all those who contributed to the **Suffolk and North Essex Law Society (SNELS) Fundraiser Dinner** which raised **£549.90** And to everyone who took part in our fundraising **Scavenger Hunt** in the pouring rain and to the wonderful local companies who contributed to our raffle – you raised **£386.32!**

And last, but not least, to my fellow **Trustees in 24-25**: Carole Parry-Jones (Vice Chair); Andrew Donnelly (Treasurer); Samantha Gallagher; Jemma Jones; Monica Kurnatowska; James Sandbach; Stevan Stratton; Paul Burton and Jo Chimes.

“Thank you so much for all your help, patience, understanding and guidance, your dedication to my case and most of all , when I thought it was too much to handle and felt like giving up, you were there for me to give me strength and hope.”

- Suffolk Law Centre Client

Professor Gareth Thomas

Chair of Trustees
Suffolk Law Centre



**Suffolk
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Designed by Jack Huzzey