

1,000 cases for support

“It costs £200 to provide Pablo with legal advice, and £1,000 to cover the costs of all the cases featured in this booklet.”

Mary Ward
Legal Centre



Claudia's Story

Claudia, who is 20, was homeless when she came to the Mary Ward Legal Centre. She had left home because of domestic violence and was living on the streets and with friends when she approached a neighbouring local authority to ask for help.

“Within an hour of leaving the appointment the solicitor rang to tell me that the council had agreed to house me”

Claudia was told that the council would not help her as she needed to go to back to the local authority where she lived prior to being homeless. However, the second local authority referred her back to the first local authority where she was turned away once more. It was at this point Claudia found the Mary Ward Legal Centre. She went to a drop-in session where she met a solicitor.

The solicitor wrote to the local authority where Claudia had lived most recently. At first the local authority did not want to accept

responsibility. However, when the solicitor challenged that decision with the prospect of a judicial review in the High Court, Claudia was found interim accommodation by the local authority.

“Within an hour of leaving the appointment the solicitor rang to tell me that the council had agreed to house me.”

Due to her situation Claudia had lacked confidence. She found strength in the support from the Mary Ward Legal Centre:

“They lightened my spirits and made me feel that I could do more than I thought was possible.”

Claudia is now in temporary accommodation, waiting for a longer term solution close to where she now lives.



A pivotal time in our history



At the Mary Ward Legal Centre we are proud of our record for enabling the most disadvantaged people to access free legal help and support. I am writing to tell you about our urgent and compelling need for funds.

Cuts in legal aid mean that we will lose funding equivalent to 1,000 cases per year. In order to continue the level of specialist

support we have provided to London's poorest and most vulnerable residents for over 100 years we must replace this income.

We believe that unless people have the means to enforce their rights, those rights have no meaning.

The case studies in this booklet demonstrate the impact our work has on people's lives.

It costs £200 to support someone like Claudia, who is featured opposite, and just £1,000 to cover the costs of all five cases featured in this booklet. We are determined to continue to provide support to the same number of people that we currently do and need to raise additional funds to support at least 1,000 cases.

"It costs £200 to support someone like Claudia and £1,000 to cover the costs of all the cases featured in this booklet"

Hearing the people we work with tell us about what we have helped them achieve has been a moving experience for both myself and the staff at the Legal Centre. We hope that it will move you in the same way. With your help we can lay the foundations to provide specialist legal support for London's poorest and most vulnerable for the next 100 years.

A handwritten signature in dark ink that reads "Diana Good".

Diana Good

Chair of The Mary Ward Settlement

About the Legal Centre

The Mary Ward Legal Centre is an independent advice centre based in Holborn, London. We give free legal advice, casework and representation to people who live or work in London. The Legal Centre was established over 100 years ago as a 'Poor Man's Lawyer' service, a precursor to the post-war Legal Aid Scheme.

We have a long and distinguished history of helping people who are disadvantaged and we do not charge clients for the advice we give or the legal work we carry out.

Joe's story

Joe was in recovery from bowel cancer when he came to the Mary Ward Legal Centre. He wanted to appeal against the decision that he was fit for work, following an Employment and Support Allowance medical.

"With cancer it's not only the illness but the treatment that can knock you sideways."

A solicitor at the Mary Ward Legal Centre explained the process involved in going to the Tribunal and helped Joe to make an appeal against the decision. Joe was very nervous going to the Tribunal. The solicitor could not accompany him

because of funding restrictions, but coached Joe through the ordeal.

At the appeal hearing, the Tribunal overturned the decision that Joe was fit for work. Joe said:

"It took us eight or nine months to get a hearing date plus all the time and effort in appealing and 15 minutes for them to change the decision."

Joe's health is improving and he has started to undertake some voluntary work. He is hoping to be fit for full-time work soon.

"With cancer it's not only the illness but the treatment that can knock you sideways"



The difference we make

Being able to make a sustained difference to the lives of our clients is a fundamental part of the work we do. We know that resolving issues through legal advice and representation can contribute to all manner of positive changes in people's lives.

The work we do improves the lives of our clients and their families by reducing debts, maximising income, challenging discrimination, saving homes and jobs, and improving general health and well-being.

Hannah's story

Hannah was referred to the Mary Ward Legal Centre for specialist help because she was being threatened with eviction after she had defaulted on a secured loan. Hannah has dyspraxia and therefore has always had difficulties dealing with her affairs.

“There is no way I’d still be in my home without the help of the Mary Ward Legal Centre”

Due to the serious nature of her problem, Hannah was given an urgent appointment at the Mary Ward Legal Centre. Her creditor was contacted immediately and the Legal Centre helped Hannah organise her budget, negotiated with her creditors and advised her of what she needed to do at court. At the court hearing Hannah was given a suspended possession order.

“There is no way I’d still be in my home without the help of the Mary Ward Legal Centre.”

Having received help from the Mary Ward Legal Centre Hannah has learnt what can be done and now feels more in control of her situation. She found the staff to be very professional and said:

“Everyone at the Mary Ward Legal Centre seems to enjoy their work and to like helping people. They don’t make you feel like they are better than you and are not judgmental.”

Hannah has been able to meet the agreed repayments and stay in her home.



Pablo's story

Pablo, who has cancer and HIV, was training as a dietician and nutritionist. Funding cuts meant his course was cancelled and he was not able to complete it. He had taken out bank loans to pay for his training and owed £14,000.

He had tried to negotiate with his bank to repay the loan but had not been successful. Pablo did not have enough money to live on and was therefore not eating properly. This was making him unwell. He said his debts made him think about "bringing it all to an end".

"I am able to deal with my life again after getting out of debt."

Pablo was referred to the Mary Ward Legal Centre who helped him to apply for a Debt Relief Order. He is now debt free and has returned to work as a volunteer for a charity providing nutrition services for people with HIV. The support Pablo

"I am able to deal with my life again after getting out of debt"

received has helped him both mentally and physically. He said:

"I've had a real boost. I've been fighting cancer and HIV for years and can now feed myself properly again."

Sorting out his debts means that Pablo can afford to buy food that keeps him healthy.



Specialist support

Many of our clients have tried to resolve their own legal problems but have not been able to. Most cannot afford to pay for a solicitor to help them. However, legal problems can become more complex if they are not resolved early.

We provide specialist support from expert legal advisers and caseworkers to help people resolve their problems to prevent them reaching court. Where necessary we will represent clients in court and tribunals. We use the law to enforce people's housing rights, secure entitlements to welfare benefits and to challenge unenforceable debt.

Susan's story

Susan was a single parent bringing up three children, two of whom were severely disabled. She had rent arrears of £6,000 and there was a possession claim against her. Not knowing what to do and at risk of becoming homeless she went to a surgery run by the Mary Ward Legal Centre at her local church. Susan was advised that she could counter claim for disrepair because of the condition of her flat.

“Before I went to the Mary Ward Centre I thought I was losing my home.”

The counter claim was successful, resulting in an agreement to offset all the arrears. The Mary Ward Legal Centre then worked with Camden Council to ensure that Susan kept her ‘homeless prevention points’. She said:

“I did not know where I would end up living or if I would be able to

find a school that could support my children. The Centre saved us and I am feeling so happy.”

Susan is now able to bid for other properties within Camden, enabling her children to remain in their specialist schools.

“Before I went to the Mary Ward Centre I thought I was losing my home”



Our track record

At the Mary Ward Legal Centre we focus our support on those most in need of legal advice, support and representation. Cases are often complex, such as those we have shared in this booklet.

We have a strong track record, including a success rate of over 90% in welfare benefit tribunal cases. This shows that with the right support clients can have access to justice. As the case studies in this booklet illustrate, this can have an enormous impact on people's lives and their families.

Our challenge

From the 1st April 2013 changes to the legal aid system have meant that the Mary Ward Legal Centre will no longer be able to provide support to over 1,000 cases every year, reducing our capacity to help vulnerable people by over 25%.

“... we are their last chance for help – they will have nowhere else to go”

This will mean that, at a time of increased demand for advice and support, we will have funding cut for at least 1,000 cases per year.

The harsh truth is that those affected will not have access to legal advice, support or representation on key welfare issues that can have a dramatic impact on their lives. For most clients, many of whom have already been referred to the Mary Ward Legal Centre, we are their last chance for help – they will have nowhere else to go.

Who we help

The Mary Ward Legal Centre focuses its services on those people unable to pay for legal advice.

- Our clients are on low incomes.
- More than 40% of the people we help have a disability.
- Over 60% are from black and minority ethnic communities.



We need your support

The Mary Ward Legal Centre is determined to continue to provide the same level of service to the number of clients that we currently help. To do this we need your support. We need to raise over £200,000 per year. This will fund the 1,000 cases that will no longer be funded by the legal aid system. If successful we can keep our doors open and continue to provide free legal advice and representation.

“At the Mary Ward Legal Centre we always focus our support on those most in need”

The difference a donation can make

A specialist case costs £200 to support. This means a donation of £1,000 can transform the lives of five people and their families, like those featured in this booklet. Our aim is to raise over £200,000 to support at least 1,000 cases each year for some of London's poorest and most vulnerable residents.



What your money can buy

People need legal advice, support and representation on cases which are often complex, just like those we have featured in this booklet. Each case costs £200. Your donations can have an incredible impact.

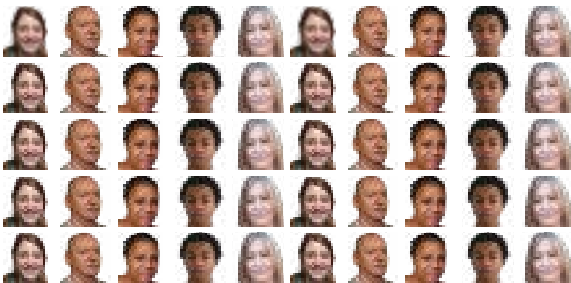
£1,000



£5,000



£10,000



Gift Aid, making your donation go further:

When a donation is made, the tax can be reclaimed by both the charity and the donor (if a higher rate tax payer). If you are a standard rate taxpayer and you sign a gift aid declaration like the one on the donation form, we can claim an extra 25p on every £1 you give. If you are a higher rate tax payer, in addition to the charity reclaiming tax at the standard rate, in your tax return you can reclaim any additional tax that you have paid.

Here is a breakdown of the costs of making a gift of £1,000:

	Donation	Gross amount to Mary Ward Legal Centre	Tax relief through donor's tax return	Effective cost to donors
40% tax payer	£1,000	£1,250	£250	£750
45% tax payer	£1,000	£1,250	£312.50	£687.50

Donation form

Standing Order Form

To set up a regular standing order donation, please complete this form and return it to: Mary Ward Legal Centre 10 Great Turnstile London WC1V 7JU.

Please do not send this form to your bank.

Title:

First Name:

Surname:

Address:

Postcode:

I would like to make a regular gift via standing order of:

☐ £25pm ☐ £55pm ☐ £85pm ☐ Other:£ (pm/pa) ☐ £1,000 annually

Please debit the above amount from my account on or around the (tick as appropriate):

☐ 1st ☐ 15th of (month) (year)

and on the same day annually until further notice from me to the Co-operative Bank, 62-64 Southampton Row, London WC1B 4AR, account number 65084854, sort code 08-90-61.

Instruction to your bank or building society to pay standing order:

Your Bank's name and address:

To: The Manager of:

Address:

(name of bank)

Postcode:

Name(s) of account holder(s):

Account No:

Sort Code:

Signature(s)

Date:

Supporter number: ☐☐☐☐☐☐☐☐☐☐ (for office use only)

Donation

I want to help the Mary Ward Legal Centre take on more cases and have enclosed a one-off cheque.

(Or you can donate at www.marywardlegal.org.uk/1000-cases-for-support/.)

☐ £5,000 ☐ £1,000 ☐ £500 ☐ Other £

Gift Aid:

If you are a taxpayer, you can make your donation worth more with Gift Aid. For every £100 you give we get an extra £25 from the Inland Revenue. To qualify for Gift Aid, what you pay in income tax or capital gains tax must at least equal the amount we will claim in the tax year.

☐ I am a UK taxpayer and would like the Mary Ward Legal Centre to treat all donations I have made since 6 April 2000, and all donations I make in the future, as Gift Aid donations until I notify you otherwise.

Signature

The Mary Ward Settlement

The Mary Ward Legal Centre is a vital part of The Mary Ward Settlement which was established in the 1890s to promote public education and social service for the benefit of the community. That aim has endured down the years, but the way it is achieved has moved with the times. The Settlement today offers access to adult education and to justice through the Mary Ward Centre and the Mary Ward Legal Centre.

For more information please contact us

Mary Ward Legal Centre, 10 Great Turnstile, London WC1V 7JU

T 020 7831 7079 **F** 020 7831 5431 www.marywardlegal.org.uk

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