

LawCare News Ireland

2018 has certainly been a busy and productive year for us all at LawCare. Concern about the mental health and wellbeing of lawyers continues to gain momentum and more people in the legal community are engaging with LawCare than ever before.

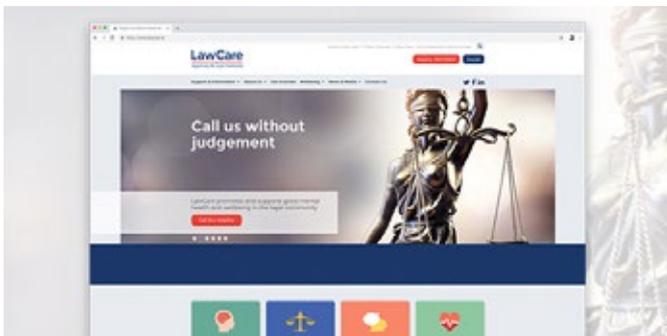


Support

We were delighted to welcome 16 new volunteers to our team this year. We trained 45 helpline volunteers and peer supporters at training sessions in Birmingham, London and Belfast. Like all our volunteers, they all have a legal background, making them uniquely placed to provide emotional support and a listening ear.

Our confidential and independent helpline achieved the **Helpline Partnerships Standard** in March. The Standard is a recognised national best practice benchmark in the UK. We have received nearly 900 calls in 2018, supporting over 600 callers, an increase on last year. Our network of peer supporters helped 27 people with issues such as anxiety, alcohol dependence, career development and work-related disciplinary issues.

Our welfare fund for those of limited means ensured 17 people in acute need accessed counselling. LawCare is here to help all branches of the legal profession from student to retirement: solicitors, barristers, barrister's clerks, judges, Chartered Legal Executives, paralegals, trade mark attorneys, patent agents, costs lawyers and their staff and families.



Information

We offer support via our website, which received a refresh in May and had over 26,000 visits in 2018 – an increase of around 25% on last year. Our factsheets on a range of issues remain popular and we have produced new factsheets on bereavement, **suicide** and **vicarious trauma**. We were delighted to host **32 guest blog posts** across our UK and Irish websites on a range of issues from how yoga can help benefit mental health to imposter syndrome. We have updated

posters and leaflets which are now available via our **dropbox account** for anyone in the legal community to share in their workplace.



Raising awareness and tackling stigma

LawCare continues to raise awareness and tackle the stigma surround mental health issues running successful campaigns for Mental Health Awareness Week in the UK and World Mental Health Day reaching thousands of people online, through the legal media and through direct contact with firms and chambers. We were pleased that LawCare featured in over 60 items of media coverage in 2018.

As part of the Legal Professions Wellbeing Taskforce we brought the profession together in England and Wales for roundtable events in May and November where we discussed emotional competency and creating mentally healthy workplaces.

We were delighted to build new partnerships with a variety of organisations including the Wesleyan Foundation, This Can Happen and Legalex. We have run three training sessions for lawyers on vicarious trauma. We continued our outreach to law firms and the professions attending 96 events across the UK and Ireland in 2018, giving talks on mental health and building 12 new relationships including Black Men in Law and the Grenfell Lawyers group. Our fundraising also received a boost this year when Linklaters took part in a charity hike raising over £7,000 for us. 20 people joined us for the London Legal Walk in May raising over £3,500.



We have also been developing international cooperation. We have shared information and resources with similar

emerging organisations in Belgium, Spain, Germany and the Netherlands. We have a new relationship with the International Bar Association and have strong links with our counterparts at the American Bar Association.

Work continues on our collaboration with the **Open University**, developing online resources in emotional competency for lawyers. As part of this we held focus groups earlier this year in London, Dublin, Cardiff, Edinburgh and Belfast. We hope to launch these resources in spring 2019.

Whilst the approaching end of the year offers us an opportunity to reflect on our achievements, we are not complacent as there is still so much more to be done. Whilst many in the legal community are now engaged in talking about the subject of mental health, there is still little action taken to address the causes of the problems. We need to change the culture of law from the top and in our view the long working hours culture which significantly contributes to poor mental health and wellbeing. Better work life balance in the law is vital. We need to also work with educators to ensure all those studying and training to become lawyers are equipped to understand the pressures of a career in the law and the support available.

We have ambitious plans and a new three year strategy for the future of LawCare. We look forward to welcoming new trustees in 2019, as well as developing our training portfolio and new methods of support including online resources. We do not know enough about the factors that compromise the mental health and wellbeing of UK and Irish lawyers and will be setting up a research advisory group in January 2019 to bring the leading academics together to address this.

We would like to thank everyone who has supported us this year, especially our funders and all our dedicated volunteers, and would like to wish all of you a very happy, peaceful and relaxing Christmas. Being with family and friends is vital to wellbeing and this time of year is the perfect opportunity to switch off for a few days. For those of you who might be experiencing a difficult time this Christmas remember the LawCare helpline is open every day of the year to offer you support.



Finally if you are interested in working with us next year by telling your story, raising awareness of LawCare and mental health issues in the legal community or helping us raise funds do get in touch in the New Year. Together we can make a difference.

Read more of our news at www.lawcare.ie/news