

The 4th UK and Ireland Best Practice Street Law Conference 2019

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The UK and Ireland Best Practice Street Law Conference has become a popular annual event on the UK clinical legal education calendar. Taking place in early autumn, the conference is unique in celebrating this area, which is often viewed as the smaller sibling of more traditional clinical legal education models. What started as a casual discussion between clinicians at an international Street Law conference, has developed to be a well-known conference attracting national and international delegates as well as input from NGOs and third sector organisations.

The unique ethos of the conference is focused on interactivity, delegate contribution and sharing best practice (both theoretical and practical). It aims to be a truly collaborative initiative between the host institution, the oversight and steering committee, and most importantly the conference delegates. It is a valuable resource for those already experienced in Street Law and a helpful platform for those starting out on the journey. It was our great pleasure that Queen Mary University of London were invited to host the fourth annual event on September the 9th and 10th 2019, attracting over 60 delegates. In the spirit of collaboration, this article is intended to draw together the themes and discussions from the two days, both for colleagues who

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were unable to join us, and perhaps also serve as a reminder to those of us who were there but were distracted with the excitement of Lego!

The two days started with a session titled '*Getting off on the right foot – considerations for impactful Street Law*'. Rachael O'Connor and Niamh Byrne really encouraged delegates to think about the reasons behind Street Law projects by looking at the why, the who and the what. Taking delegates through these factors, using the University of Leeds' work as a case study. The session highlighted some common traps that Street Law projects can fall into, such as placing too much focus on the students (both in terms of numbers and content), insufficient interactivity within workshops, and not selecting relevant and appropriate topics. The session gave some valuable tips to ensure projects are impactful, including; logistical preparations to secure schools early, arranging dates in advance, as well as collaborations both external of the university and internally (e.g. with widening participation / safeguarding teams etc.). Supporting projects with proper training for students and collaborators were key, as well as lesson plans and handbooks which will also increase impact. For example, teaching external volunteers about the interactive ethos of Street Law can be both necessary and useful. The top four takeaways from this session were;

1. start with the why, who and what (and remember them throughout),
2. understand everyone's involvement, and keep them all connected,

3. design Street Law with your audience in mind rather than just focussing on the participating students, and

4. be organised.

The day continued with an interesting insight into the use of student committees to further Street Law initiatives delivered by a team from the University of East Anglia. This session clearly reminded us not to underestimate the power and ability of university students to lead and coordinate Street Law initiatives. The team outlined their experience using students to help with recruitment, logistics, running projects and DBS training which facilitated a larger programme than staff could otherwise deliver. Although sometimes using students can be hard, this session was an important reminder of the power (and educational value) of involving students in leadership.

Moving from the more general themes of Street Law to a specific topic many delegates recognise, sex education; Rachael Kirkup from BPP gave a valuable look into the new Sex and Relationship Education (SRE) legislation which will be part of the national curriculum from September 2020. Interestingly Rachael highlighted the legal duty schools have to protect and safeguard students, which vastly contrasts with the 20 year old guidance in this area (which is old fashioned, outdated and limited in scope). Perhaps more crucially its delivery in schools is optional.

The session titled “Getting Street Law Ready for Statutory SRE” helpfully outlined the topics that schools will need to teach. In summary, the three core areas are;

1. relationship education in primary school (including families and people who care, caring friendships, respectful relationships, online relationships and being safe);
2. relationships and sex education in secondary school (including families, respectful relationships including friendships, online and media, being safe and intimate and sexual relationships including sexual health; and
3. health education for both primary and secondary aged students (mental wellbeing, internet safety, physical health and fitness, healthy eating, drugs, alcohol and tobacco, health prevention and first aid and changes of the adolescent body).

The specific detail of the new topics include more gender neutral language, and discuss LGBT issues as well as the impact of technology for SRE. Some specific legal topics include; marriage, consent, violence against women, online behaviour including image and information sharing, pornography, abortion, sexuality, gender identity, substance misuse, extremism, gang violence, criminal exploitation, hate crime and FGM.

For full details on the topics please see;

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/relationships-education-relationships-and-sex-education-rse-and-health-education/relationships-and-sex-education-rse-secondary>.

The session also highlighted some important resources to help lead Street Law projects in this area, e.g. free online learning resources from Brook; <https://learn.brook.org.uk/> and <https://legacy.brook.org.uk/our-work/how-to-deliver-sre>.

Following the lunchbreak we had some quick-fire sessions; including specific considerations for delivering Street Law in primary schools and how to make law accessible to children; and a discussion on the best techniques for making contacts in Street Law when you have no contacts. So thinking outside the norm to generate the links to start a project. Examples included using students as a 'get in' to schools and organisations, newsletters, and engaging widening participation teams. Delegate suggestions included holding a training session for school teachers which then led to a Street Law project for the students. The third quick-fire session was led by Amy Wallace who introduced delegates to the Summer Bridge Programme at New York Law School. This remarkable programme is designed to 'bridge the gap' between 9th graders moving from Junior High School into High School. It involves undertaking a three week Street Law programme led by law students from New York Law School. The topics covered include; the Rule of Law, gun law and juvenile justice

programmes, before moving on to a mock senate hearing and a mock trial in weeks two and three. The project had the joint benefits of getting school students 'school ready' and providing a summer job for law students. An interesting idea, developed from a community request – perhaps demonstrating the real 'why' of Street Law. This unique programme no doubt has applicability in numerous jurisdictions and logistically falls in the calendar year when most law students, school students and clinicians have a little more time.

We were delighted that the team from Street Law Inc. based in Washington DC were able to join us for this conference (<https://www.streetlaw.org/>). Street Law Inc. started in the 1970s and have developed programmes and teaching materials to educate community groups about law and government. They support classroom teachers, government and community organisations to be effective in and with the law. They brought a wealth of knowledge and support to the conference as well as leading a quick-fire session to show delegates video resources available to use for free on their website. We watched this step by step video on how to set up a street law deliberation; <https://store.streetlaw.org/deliberation-resource-bundle-and-video/>. There are another three very useful videos which can be found here; <https://store.streetlaw.org/videos/> as well as a host of other resources. These cover the topics of facilitator tips, mini-moot courts, and taking a stand. Although some may be jurisdiction based, there is cross applicability for many.

Many of the sessions at this conference were designed around the problems which are faced in currently running Street Law projects. Hannah Busicott from Swansea University took on the unenviable task of discussing teamwork in a session titled; 'Teaching Teamwork: is it such a dreadful task'. The session highlighted the difference between teamwork and group work (noting *Tarricone, P. & Luca, J. (2002)* six criteria; commitment to team success and shared goals, interdependence, interpersonal skills, open communication and positive feedback, appropriate team composition, and commitment to team processes, leadership and accountability).

The session discussed techniques about how we as clinicians could empower students to identify when their team is not working together and what can be done about it. Interestingly Hannah discussed a BPP survey on what employers hoped to see from graduates which put the ability to work in a team as the 6th highest sought after skill². A thought-provoking point which provides another reason to champion student committees as discussed above. We discussed the usual problems of distracted students, free-loaders and stressed students; and Hannah mind mapped a potential solution into the following stages; grouping the students, group formation, expectation setting, task allocation, technology and assessment and feedback. Getting these stages right and properly engaging students in each stage can have an overall positive effect with the issue of ineffective teamwork.

² Jo-Ann Pugh, BPP University Law School, "The law training report: What skills do firms expect of new entrants to possess in the post SQE era?" (2018).

The conference continued into the afternoon on a slightly more theoretical basis. Stephanie Jones and Lucy Blackburn from the University of Central Lancashire considered the role that Street Law has to play in helping students develop from being strategic surface level learners to deep learners suitable for future practice. With the Solicitors Qualifying Examination seeming to promote surface level learning, Stephanie and Lucy urged us to remember Peter Birk's phrase; *"The practising lawyer who could merely do his job would be no more than a mechanic, useless in comparison with one endowed with the power and reasoning about the law and about its grounds and principles."* A compelling argument to support the 'why' discussed in our opening session.

The penultimate session of the day focused on professional legal ethics (the Solicitors Regulation Authority principles and the Bar Standards Board core duties). We regularly promote clinical legal education as a good (if not one of the best) setting to teach professional legal ethics to law students. This is perhaps easiest to visualise with 1-2-1 client advisory or representation work. This session invited delegates to consider openly teaching legal professional ethics to students through Street Law activities as well. A panel consisting of Richard Grimes, Linden Thomas and Freda Grealy shared their wealth of experience as well as delegates simultaneously contributing through a Padlet wall (<https://en-gb.padlet.com/>). The conference

identified a number of the Solicitors Regulation Authority principles³ as being applicable to Street Law, including but not limited to;

- number 1: acting in a way that upholds the constitutional principles of the rule of law, and the proper administration of justice,
- number 3: acting with independence (e.g. if a community group want you to deliver a message in a certain way and you feel that is inappropriate), and
- number 6: acting in a way that encourages equality, diversity and inclusion.

It was noted that Public Legal Education more widely is directly linked to these principles. There was a general view that Street Law and Public Legal Education upholds the trust that the public has in the legal profession as it is about legal literacy rather than mystification - transparency helping engender trust. General themes raised in this session included; ethics surrounding the choice of audience (for example should we be helping employees rather than employers), the choice of topic and how that topic is delivered to an audience (especially if they are young). Issues of insurance for Street Law projects also raised links to acting with integrity and in the interests of each 'client' (which could equally mean each community group). The design of a Street Law project including the supervision, choice of topic / audience, and feedback all feed into the potential to have interesting reflection on professional legal ethics.

³ The updated version in effect from 25/11/2019.

The day closed with Alan Wheeler from Middlesex University leading a session on 'Learning with Lego' which was inspired by Lego Serious play and facilitates the process of open communication through building and storytelling. We started with the process of building something that everyone feels comfortable with (like a duck), before moving on to building more structured models around law / Street Law which can generate discussion or reflection. Perhaps school students can be asked to build what they think a lawyer looks like in an attempt to target social norms. Could Street Law students build a model of what Street Law is at the end of a project to start a reflective discussion?



After finishing in an array of coloured plastic on day 1; day 2 started with the trickier subject of evaluation. The Street Law Inc. team gave the important reminder that evaluation does not need to be formal or even particularly extensive – something we can forget. We are often so easily intimidated by evaluation which can be as straightforward as getting a coffee with someone and having a discussion. Evaluation was considered from various points of view, including teachers, pupils, the institution (like

a school) as well our law students and the legal profession. The reminder of a crucial lesson - not everything that is important can be measured, and not everything that we measure is always important. Much of these variables will depend on the model of Street Law, the community group, and the students in question.

Sheffield Hallam gave a brilliant case study of teaching a human rights Street Law project in Lesotho. The impact of a wonderbag (<https://www.wonderbagworld.com/>) on the ability of (usually) woman to access human rights is not ordinarily thought of, but this session led us through the practical impact a physical 'slow cooker' could have on their ability to be educated and work. A lesson in how seemingly simple practical matters can impact on fundamental freedoms, and a good reminder to think outside the box when designing Street Law projects. Students from Sheffield Hallam led Street Law sessions for locals (mainly women), identifying different human rights issues that were relevant to them. Interestingly the community in Lesotho raised that there was a human right to a happy life. A truly humbling experience for staff and students to hear. Street Law that crosses cultural and perhaps more crucially language barriers presented an interesting challenge to law students that was wholeheartedly met by the students of Sheffield Hallam. This brave venture and lesson in logistics demonstrated that we don't need to shy away from certain community groups who could be worthy beneficiaries of Street Law projects.

In a week of politics when the Rule of Law was highly topical, Valarie Robertson from the Law Society and Michael Olatokun from the Bingham Centre for the Rule of Law led us away from Street Law and took us into the broad sphere of Public Legal Education. It was a reminder of cross over these two areas have and the importance of giving this context to the students we are teaching. They asked clinicians to perceive themselves as playing a role in a nationwide movement to forward to the Rule of Law and achieve social justice through it. The Law Society aims for PLE are as follows.

- Help the public understand how and when they should take legal advice from a qualified and regulated solicitor.
- Inform the public about where legal aid still exists and when they can use it.
- Improve the public's perception of solicitors and the justice system through increasing their understanding of the law⁴.

Justice week (in collaboration with the Bar and Cilex) is a spin off from National Pro Bono Week. The Law Society wished to encourage delegates to host events (and offered support with publicity and assistance for collaborations).

⁴ <https://www.lawsociety.org.uk/support-services/public-legal-education/our-public-legal-education-work/> <accessed 28/10/19>.

The seven key goals for Public Legal Education outlined by Solicitor General's Committee on Public Legal Education were discussed⁵.

Goal 1: Be supported by a robust evidence base and a body of research showing where the need is and what works best.

Goal 2: Be of a high quality, maintained to ensure that it remains accurate, accessible and useful for the people who need it and have significant social impact.

Goal 3: Universality of PLE reach across all demographics. Prioritising reaching children, young adults and vulnerable groups in significant numbers across the UK – with the support of intermediaries.

Goal 4: Be scaled up through delivery by the legal community.

Goal 5: Harness technology and be delivered through innovative methods both on and offline.

Goal 6: Be embedded into public services and government departments particularly as an aspect of early intervention in health, advice and community settings.

⁵ <https://www.lawworks.org.uk/about-us/news/public-legal-education-new-vision-statement> <accessed 28.10.19>.

Goal 7: Be understood as beneficial and utilised, by other sectors (e.g. banks, insurance, trade unions, and housing).

As part of Public Legal Education delegates were encouraged to think about life after the Street Law project. About the life of those in receipt of projects / workshops moving forward. They noted that there was particular interest in the ‘find a solicitor’ page on the Law Society website – should we be including this in Street Law leaflets that are given out? They also built on the message from the Wonderbag, and noted that there were particular problems with services for the elderly going online, meaning that some members of society could not access them. Delegates were strongly encouraged to read “Decentering Law through Public Legal Education” by Lisa Wintersteiger and Tara Mulqueen⁶. A fantastic article highlighting the tension of Public Legal Education and the growing trend for the public to have responsibility for coping with their own legal issues (e.g. in light of the fall of legal aid).

Another useful resource highlighted in the session was the Advice Now website (<https://www.advicenow.org.uk/>) which is know how tips to deal with everyday problems.

Another round of quick fire 5 minute sessions evaluated a secondary school initiative on stop and search which interestingly asked a group of students whether they knew

⁶ Wintersteiger, Lisa and Mulqueen, Tara. (2017) Decentering law through public legal education. Onati Socio-legal Series, 7 (7).

anyone who carried a knife, before anonymously feeding the information from the session back to the school. This gave the Street Law initiative more depth and impact than just being a one off session. Linden Thomas guided us through surveys suggesting they could be used at the beginning and end of session to assist in evaluations. There was also agreement that the teachers or leaders within different community groups could also be asked to contribute to evaluations (rather than just the participants).

Delegates had a quick introduction to the ease of using QR codes to receive feedback quickly and easily. The Open University were finding paper evaluations were just not being used and this provided a modern and useful approach which is a bit different. QR code generators can be easily found on line.

In the post lunch session, current Street Law students debated whether Street Law should be available for credit in the curriculum or whether the ethos of pro bono meant it was better offered as an extra-curricular activity. While the answer remained split, one thing was clear – the idea of the student voice feeding into this annual event was a popular feature. As we move into the fifth year of hosting the conference, perhaps we will start to encourage more universities to fund equal places to students as to staff to attend the event.

The importance of students having a bridge that helps them to develop Street Law projects was highlighted with the Open University's Adaptability Model. Being able

to customise a teaching resource allows students to deliver a sound and bespoke Street Law service. The adaptability model contains 5 stages.

1. Collecting information from the client about the project, including what is already within the knowledge base of the client.
2. Processing the information to develop a workshop and methodology.
3. Delivery of the workshop adapted to the client.
4. Feedback (participants, community group lead e.g. teacher, law students, tutors).
5. Reflection (in this model it being part of the assessment).

With Street Law gaining popularity in the UK and Ireland we are seeing credit bearing courses arise. With credit bearing courses, arise the need for student reading lists / resources to be collated and published to students. The final session focused on student reading and was led by Karen Watton (Queen Mary University of London) and Sarah Morse (Northumbria University). After considering why we have reading lists, and who interested parties might be, delegate groups focused on what the priority of a reading list is. The choices to rank included; skills, topic specific, reflection, Street Law, clinical legal education and Public Legal Education. Delegates then shared their knowledge of authors / journals and articles which could be useful sources for a reading list. Karen and Sarah have helpfully collated an Uber Reading List with many suggestions on. For colleagues starting a Street Law programme or

looking to re-vamp reading texts, please do get in contact with Karen (k.watton@qmul.ac.uk) or Sarah (sarah.morse@northumbria.ac.uk) for a copy of the list so far. There were also discussions on the quantity of reading for practical courses and whether extra-curricular students should also be reading to improve their knowledge and base. The age old query of whether reading should be drip fed through a project / course or delivered 'upfront' was also approached although there did not appear to be a consensus.

Looking back on the themes, problems and issues discussed by delegates and session leaders throughout this conference it was clear that everyone felt proud to be part of a truly collaborative opportunity to share best practice. It is in that spirit, that we felt it proper to write up this brief summary and share the themes topics more widely with readers. Do look out for the fifth UK and Ireland Best Practice Street Law Conference which, due to COVID-19, we hope will take place in autumn 2021.