



# SPOTLIGHT

Issue 1 - June 2008

30 Years Anniversary

*The Quarterly Newsletter of the RCJ Advice Bureau*



## Welcome to our first Newsletter

By James Banks, Director

### Special points of interest:

- London Legal Walk 2008
- 3 years secured funding for the Capitalise Team
- The MOJO conference

I am delighted to welcome you to the first edition of the RCJ Advice Bureau's quarterly newsletter, which will shine a spotlight on our successes, on the issues our clients face and on our plans for the future, to ensure that all our key stakeholders are kept informed about developments affecting the Bureau and the people we support.

2008 sees the Bureau enter its 30<sup>th</sup> year of operation, with demand for our services greater than ever. This is a challenging time for the advice sector, with many of our colleagues facing threats to their funding and increased competition for limited resources.

We are grateful, therefore, for the continued support of our funders who are listed on the back of this newsletter. I would also like to take this opportunity to thank our friends from across the legal community, who give us invaluable support through their pro bono work and activities such as the London Legal Walk.

We will be marking our 30<sup>th</sup> anniversary year with a series of events, including a summer concert at the Royal Courts of Justice on 9<sup>th</sup> July at 1pm, where we will be joined by

the choirs and brass bands of local primary schools. I hope you will be able to join us.



James Banks, Director

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## London Legal Walk 2008

Well done to all walkers who took part in the London Legal Sponsored Walk on 19 May, organised by the London Legal Support Trust. The 10km walk around London's legal landmarks was well organised and proved to be a great success once again with record numbers of participants. Our very own RCJ Advice Bureau team, including our youngest walker aged 10 months, were easily identified with their white t-



shirts carrying our 30 year anniversary logo on the front.

The weather looked distinctly unfriendly at times with dark clouds threatening to unleash a downpour anytime but it remained dry and turned out to be good weather for walking. Undeterred, our walkers completed their rewarding challenge and raised funds for a very worthwhile cause.

This year's event has raised over £300,000 for legal advice

charities across London and the Home Counties and exceeds last year's effort by a huge margin. A fantastic achievement





Funding

## Capitalise Team—Secure funding

The Money Advice Team has just completed its first full year as a member of Capitalise. Capitalise is a partnership of charities and independent advice organisations across London, supported by the government's Financial Inclusion Fund. It aims to reduce debt and financial exclusion by improving people's capacity to manage their debts and take more control over their finances.

With the extra funding provided, the Money Advice Team was able to expand from 2 full-time

advisers to 5. It increased the frequency of its advice desk at the bankruptcy courts from two to five days a week. Throughout the year, it has also reached out to financially excluded clients by providing advice at job centres and housing associations, as well as accepting referrals from other Capitalise partners and CABs for their clients who need specialist bankruptcy advice.

Through their hard work and dedication, the team provided advice to over 700 clients, with a cumulative personal debt in

excess of £28 million. Success in meeting their targets has ensured that the funding to continue this important service has been extended for another three years.

In each edition of this newsletter the team will provide further insights into their essential and timely work.

*“becoming a CAB adviser is a great learning curve”.*

## Volunteer's Team

Our team of hardworking Volunteers are focused on providing a first class service with a friendly yet professional approach and reaching a positive outcome for our clients is our forte.

One Volunteer, a law student at **The College of Law** says: **“Yes, becoming a CAB adviser is a great learning curve”.** Furthermore, due to our

**Bureau's high reputation** it's a well recognised reference to have on their CV. Despite this benefit it's the Volunteer's team spirit which is most appealing. The Volunteer went on: **“there's a genuine passion to help others which is undeniable”.**

Tremendous support and dedication is also received from others such as professionals

who have taken early retirement and those who bring up their children. They all bring a wealth of knowledge and experience from **‘the University of Life’**.

We are committed and also have fun. Everybody including our clients bring something different to make the day interesting, challenging and rewarding.

## Legal Team—Immigration case



Our solicitors are here for you

The Civil Appeals Office approached The Bureau regarding representation in an immigration appeal for a Somali who has resided legally in the UK since 1997. He has committed criminal offences in the UK and served custodial sentences.

The Home Office ordered deportation on grounds of public pol-

icy. The client has, with aid of solicitors, been granted permission to appeal. His solicitors stopped acting for him before the hearing and the Court lawyer has asked us to get him representation.

The Court considers this an **important ‘test case’** which may set a precedent as to the bal-

ance between public policy and individual rights. We have referred his papers to the Bar Pro Bono Unit and are confident they will get a specialist barrister to represent him.

## Miscarriages of Justice Support Service—MOJO Conference

James Banks, Director and Jeanette Daly Mathias, Specialist Adviser attended the two day conference on Miscarriages of Justice: Limits to Reparation in Glasgow.

The conference aimed to provide a comprehensive insight into the damaging psychological and social effects of wrongful conviction. MOJO hope to create a permanent residential retreat that would provide support and counselling to wrongly convicted prisoners.

Gerry Conlon, survivor of the Guildford Four miscarriage of justice, spoke of the trauma suffered. Guest speaker, Terry Waite spoke about his own ordeal and how he was assisted with specialist psychological help upon release from captivity and likened this to a diver coming up slowly, avoiding the bends at a gradual pace. Dr Adrian Grounds, echoed calls for the need for a retreat.

We recognise the gap in service provision for adequate psychological care for the wrongly convicted and their families. With-

out this care to the wrongly convicted, they remain traumatised and at risk.

We would like to thank MOJO Scotland for their warm hospitality at the conference and offer them support in the call for an essential retreat for the wrongly convicted and their families. If you would like to find out more about MOJO, please visit [www.mojonational.com](http://www.mojonational.com)



## A timely reminder to seek help before it's too late

The case study below from our LSC Specialist Debt Adviser shows that if you approach your mortgage lender for help in good time you could reap rewards:

The Client came to the Bureau for help with his mortgage arrears (over £7,000) because he was being threatened with the repossession of his property which is worth around

£300,000. The client is in receipt of benefits and the outstanding mortgage is around £18,000 with five years term left.

The client had put the property on the market for a while but it had not attracted much interest so he decided to renovate it himself and then sell it. The client stated that he would pay off all his debts from the proceeds of the sale.

The Bureau successfully negotiated with client's mortgagee who agreed to consolidate the client's current arrears with the outstanding capital balance and to extend the mortgage term.

They also agreed to change the method of repayment from capital and interest to interest only. His Housing Costs Benefit would probably cover interest repayment on £18,000.



## Management Focus

- The Bureau has developed its Business Plan for the year ahead, setting challenging targets in relation to our objectives of:
  - \* increasing access;
  - \* enhancing communication;
  - \* improving client experience; and
  - \* developing our people.

Everyone in the Bureau team is working towards these goals.
- CLS Grant funding of £283,000 per annum for three years has been secured, enabling us to continue to meet the advice needs of litigants in person at both our Bureau offices
- Capitalise funding (from BERR) has been confirmed for another three years, supporting the work of our specialist money advice/bankruptcy team
- London Councils have awarded the Bureau £347,000 over four years to build on the success of our work meeting the advice needs of Londoners
- We are grateful to the Commercial Litigators Forum who raised over £100,000 at their charity evening, which will be split between the Bureau and other major pro bono charities



Team Work

# The Quarterly Newsletter of the RCJ Advice Bureau



Royal Courts of Justice  
Strand  
London WC2A 2LL

AND

Principal Registry of the Family Division  
Fourth Floor, First Avenue House  
42-49 High Holborn  
London WC1V 6NP



*We give a heartfelt thank you to our invaluable funders, without whom we would not exist.*

Got a problem? We are here to help you!



30 Years Anniversary

We're on the web:

[www.rcjadvice.org.uk](http://www.rcjadvice.org.uk)

Thanks to the generous donations from  
Matrix Chambers Causes Fund &  
Garden Court Chambers Special Fund

*Did you know, 1978 was also the year of:*

- \* the three Popes, Pope Paul the Sixth died of a heart attack aged eighty.
- \* the first Balloon to Cross the Atlantic
- \* the first 'test tube baby' born.
- \* the Protection of Children Act.
- \* Employment Protection (Consolidation) Act.



Raise money for THE RCJ CITIZENS ADVICE BUREAU every time you search the web. Copy and paste the below web page.  
<http://www.everyclick.com/thercjcitizensadvicebureau/1050358/0>

## Roberta Tish—Family HLA (Honorary Legal Adviser)

I am delighted the RCJ Advice Bureau invited me to contribute to their first newsletter and asked why I volunteered to become an HLA at the Principal Registry of the Family Division.

**I don't remember how I learnt** there was a Family Law Advice Bureau at the Registry. I was no longer doing Legal Aid and felt that I ought to contribute to those needing legal advice but did not have the resources to pay for it.

**I wasn't sure what to expect from** staff or Clients, but the pleasurable discovery was that the former are helpful, dedicated and extraordinarily friendly, and the latter have introduced me to

virtually every aspect of Family Law providing me with a valuable learning curve.

The feelgood factor apart, I think it worthwhile for everybody to engage in Pro Bono work. In Family Law, there is now a great divide between those that can afford to pay their own costs and the diminishing number of those entitled to Legal Aid.

I run a very small practice but a half day every month at the CAB is a valuable investment in society as well as enhanced knowledge, whether you are a partner in a large firm or a sole practitioner this is something in which you should become involved.

***“I think it worthwhile for everybody to engage in Pro Bono work.”***

