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## Northumbria University and HMCTS Launch Innovative Support Sessions for Litigants in Person in Newcastle Family Court

Northumbria University's award-winning [Student Law Office](#) has partnered with His Majesty's Courts and Tribunals Service (HMCTS) to help individuals without legal representation navigate the Court system.

The innovative project responds to the growing number of unrepresented

Litigants in Person (LiPs) in family court proceedings, following legal aid restrictions introduced under the Legal Aid, Sentencing and Punishment of Offenders Act (LASPO). With many LiPs unfamiliar with court procedures and terminology, the sessions aim to reduce anxiety and improve confidence and understanding before hearings at the Newcastle Civil and Family Court without legal representation.

Delivered by law students under the guidance of Clinical Supervising Lawyers (CSLs), Northumbria's Student Law Office offers vital legal services on a regional and national level free of charge to members of the public, businesses and community groups. Under this latest initiative, 40-minute sessions are held in actual Courtrooms where LiPs are introduced to key elements of the court process, including legal terminology, courtroom roles, conduct expectations, and preparation tips.

Leanne Sutherland, CSL at the Northumbria Student Law Office, explained: "These sessions are about public legal education, not legal advice. We want to help individuals feel more confident and better prepared for their time in court. It's about demystifying the process and ensuring people have access to the tools they need to engage effectively with the legal system.

"It's also another great example of our law clinic providing students with valuable hands-on legal practice experience with real clients – enhancing both their learning experience and career prospects."

With no comparable initiative currently running in the North East, the service for LiPs fills a vital gap by offering structured, practical support for those attending Family Court hearings without a lawyer. While the project does not replicate the work of organisations like Citizens Advice or Support Through Court, it complements them through effective signposting and potential partnership opportunities.

"It's not only LiPs who will benefit," added Leanne. "Solicitors, advice workers and volunteers will also gain from understanding how to refer clients for support, helping to create a more joined-up approach to family law guidance in the region."

The service includes tailored sessions for Applicants and Respondents, with measures in place to avoid overlap for safeguarding and neutrality. Attendees can request a detailed information pack following the session and will be

signposted to appropriate advice services for any further assistance.

Information about the sessions is included with every Notice of Hearing issued by the Court and promoted through Northumbria's networks, including local law firms and community advice agencies.

Since 2005, Northumbria's multi award-winning Student Law Office has managed more than 10,000 enquiries, represented more than 3,000 clients with real legal problems and secured over £1.7 million on their behalf.

For more information or to book a session or make an enquiry, please visit the [Student Law Office](#) website

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