



L-R Bethan Fisher, Abigail Johnson, Freya Herbert and Lily Rea from the Student Law Office

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Student Law Office partnership with HMCTS provides invaluable real-world training while supporting individuals through the family courts

Northumbria University law graduates highlight the transformative impact of EduCourt, an innovative collaboration between the University's award-winning [Student Law Office](#) and His Majesty's Courts and Tribunals Service (HMCTS).

The pioneering project provides valuable support for unrepresented individuals navigating family court proceedings, addressing the growing number of Litigants in Person (LiPs) following legal aid restrictions, while providing students with unprecedented hands-on experience and delivering vital public legal education.

Student Gus McGloin described the dual impact: "Before I got involved with EduCourt, I had never been inside a courtroom and had no idea how the courts operated. However, being given the opportunity to not only go to a courtroom, but also present in one, was insightful and bolstered my presentation skills. Being in a courtroom also enhanced my presenting, as I could physically see what I was talking about and describing which I feel helped massively."

Clinical Supervising Lawyer Louise Dodd and law graduates Gus McGloin and Lily Rea discuss the EduCourt collaboration.

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Recent graduate Freya Herbert echoed this sentiment, describing the project as "rewarding" and transformative for her professional development. "It has given me the opportunity to present to clients in a real court room, allowing me to develop my public speaking and confidence when approaching a court room setting," she explained.

The unique nature of EduCourt extends beyond traditional clinical legal

education, offering students networking opportunities with legal professionals. Freya added: "It has further allowed me to network with several family Judges in the area, as well as other members of court staff, who have offered their advice to us as aspiring legal professionals."

Fellow graduate Imaya Pathirana emphasised how the project enhanced her practical skills while serving the community: "My role involved delivering presentations to Litigants in Person, providing them with information on what to expect at family hearings and how to conduct themselves. These sessions helped make the court process feel more accessible for attendees."

The 40-minute sessions, held in actual courtrooms at Newcastle Civil and Family Court, introduce LiPs to key elements of the court process, including legal terminology, courtroom roles, conduct expectations, and preparation tips.

Louise Dodd, Clinical Supervising Lawyer at the Northumbria Student Law Office, highlighted the dual benefits: "It's great to see such positive feedback from our recent graduates reflecting on how working in our law clinic has enhanced both their learning experience and career prospects, and help provide a valuable community service.

"EduCourt not only helps LiPs, although there is a strong focus on this, but anyone contemplating or currently in proceedings for example those who are represented but nervous about attending court - and we have had professionals attend also. Our student-centred approach helps plug a gap in the legal sector, certainly here in the North East, where no comparable initiative previously existed."

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.

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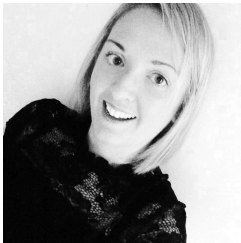
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