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## Student volunteering partnership expands following five years of community impact

Following the success of a *Law in the Community* project, Northumbria University is expanding the initiative to include a new partnership with Citizens Advice Gateshead, building on five years of collaboration with Citizens Advice Newcastle that has provided vital free legal advice to people across the region.

Since [launching in 2019 with Citizens Advice Newcastle](#), the project has seen law students volunteering to support their expert advisors in providing free

legal advice to clients over the telephone and in face-to-face appointments on a diverse range of legal areas, including family law, debt, housing, welfare, employment law, consumer law and immigration. The project is now extending to include a partnership with Citizens Advice Gateshead.

The expansion means even more students will have the opportunity to gain hands-on experience whilst supporting their local community.



Northumbria Law student, Elle Fox, is due to start volunteering at Citizens Advice in the new year. She said: “As a strong advocate for pro-bono work and ensuring that everyone has access to justice, being able to volunteer my time at Citizens Advice next semester gives me the opportunity to give back to the community. I am grateful that Northumbria has built these connections, as not only does it facilitate those who cannot gain legal services as easily as others, but it also facilitates mine and my peers’ learning on a practical level; engaging with a cross-section of society means understanding individuals’ needs and how my practice can be tailored to benefit as many people as possible.”

Dr Lyndsey Bengtsson, from Northumbria Law School, commented on the partnership: “We’re really pleased to be expanding our Law in the Community module. Our partnership with Citizens Advice Newcastle has gone from strength to strength, and we’re delighted to now also work with Citizens Advice Gateshead.

“Access to justice remains a real challenge for many in the region since the legal aid cuts in 2012. Through this module, our law students volunteer at Citizens Advice offices, supporting their expert advisers who work with clients on a range of issues including benefits and housing to employment

rights and debt problems. It's a valuable opportunity for students to develop the practical skills they'll need as future lawyers, whilst helping Citizens Advice support more people in our community who need quality legal advice."

Arianne Graven, Service Manager from Citizens Advice Gateshead added: "Cuts to legal aid have left a huge gap in support for people going through the legal process, and through this strategic partnership with Northumbria Law School, we can support more people who otherwise can't access the legal and civil rights advice and support they need. It's valuable experience for the students and significantly enhances the work we do at Citizens Advice Gateshead."

Commenting on the success of the existing *Law in the Community* project, Lesley Childs, Service Manager from Citizens Advice Newcastle, said: "This partnership has allowed us to support hundreds more clients than we could have reached otherwise. The students arrive eager to learn and leave with a much deeper understanding of how the legal system affects the everyday lives of real people. It's been brilliant to watch them grow in confidence while making a genuine contribution to our service."

To find out more about Northumbria Law School please visit [www.northumbria.ac.uk/law](http://www.northumbria.ac.uk/law)

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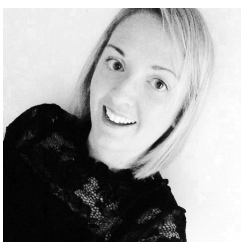
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