

A message from **Nick Gallagher, CEO**

The end of the year is a time for taking stock. Looking back across the last twelve months the demand for our help has continued to rise. We will end this year having offered assistance on 20% more occasions than last. This increase has been met by volunteers and staff across our network which now includes Bournemouth, West London Family Court, Newport and Chester. There are now 20 PSU locations across 16 cities.

Besides direct support we work to help remove barriers to our clients' ability to access justice. With HMCTS we have developed and piloted a new 'Help with Fees' form, replacing the 'Fee Remission' form. The new form is more user-friendly, using simpler language.

We provide insights into the experiences of Litigants in Person in areas such as money claims cases, to help the development of the online court. PSUs around the country have supported HMCTS staff in talking directly to clients about their experience and their appetite for using digital technology. We have also played a central role in the development of new legal advice clinics up and down the country.

We can do none of this without your support. As the festive season approaches you can read more about how we helped one of our clients get back her two year old son in the very final hours before last Christmas. Thank you for your support that allowed us to help them and to provide help to others on tens of thousands of occasions in 2016.

Nick Gallagher
CEO



Challenge Everest

The PSU's annual climbing challenge took place last month in Sheffield and Cardiff, raising over £4,000. A big thank you to winning teams *KilimaNabarro* and *Rebels* and all the legal firms and students who took part.



Our upcoming events 2017

Visit: www.thepsu.org/events

Contact: events@thepsu.org.uk

West London Family Court Launch, 19 January

If you're interesting in attending the launch party of our new PSU at Hounslow Registry Office, email Klara at wffc@thepsu.org.uk

The Game of the College of Litigants, London Friends' Event, 7 February, 6-9pm

Join us for drinks and an illustrated talk by Professor Adrian Seville, international expert on the history of printed board games, at the Honourable Society of Lincoln's Inn. Register at www.thepsu.org/events

Bristol Mooting Competition, 4.15pm 9 February

A contest between BPP, University of Bristol, University of Law and University of the West of England at the Bristol Civil and Family Justice Centre, contact bristol@thepsu.org.uk

London to Amsterdam Cycle, 31 May - 4 June

Cycle through beautiful English villages and on into mainland Europe, passing through historic Bruges and Breda before finishing in any cyclists dream city, Amsterdam. Email events@thepsu.org.uk



Follow us on Twitter:
twitter.com/CourtBasedPSU



Connect with us on LinkedIn:
linkedin.com/company/the-personal-support-unit

Last Christmas we helped Lucy* at a desperate time in her life

Our Christmas appeal highlights the inspirational case of Lucy, a mother fighting for her two-year-old, alone in court. We hope to gain support as widely as possible this Christmas as we expect a 20% rise this year in people urgently needing our help.

Lucy* arrived at our PSU office feeling distressed and nervous. It was the afternoon of the 23rd December 2015 – the last day that the courts would be open before the Christmas break. She had come to see us about her two year old son, Liam*, who had been taken away without permission by her ex-partner. Lucy was extremely worried as her ex-partner had little involvement in Liam's life and there was a history of domestic abuse. He had broken into her property in the past and had recently been suicidal. Lucy had immediately contacted the police but as the father had parental responsibility for the child, the police needed a court order.

When we met Lucy and listened to her story, we knew we needed to act quickly. We liaised with the court staff to help her complete the forms she needed. Once the forms were completed and submitted most of the judges had already gone home for the holidays. Fortunately, a Deputy District Judge had been walking past the PSU on his way home. With the court staff we were able to convince him to stay and hold a hearing. We went with Lucy to the hearing to provide reassurance as by this point she was extremely upset.

In the end, the judge issued an order allowing the police to remove the child from his father and return him to Lucy. Understandably, Lucy burst into tears on hearing the news, overjoyed that she would be able to spend Christmas with her Liam.

* Names changed to protect client confidentiality

Please can you help people like Lucy facing court alone? www.thepsu.org.uk

PSU opens in West London Family Court, Feltham

There is a real need for PSU volunteers at the West London Family Court, where approximately 70% of all private law Children Act cases involve at least one parent who does not have the benefit of any legal advice. Volunteers can help people without an appointment, free of charge, every Tuesday, Wednesday and Thursday from 9.30am to 4.30pm in the West London Family Court, Feltham.

District Judge Middleton-Roy, is very supportive of the service and said *"Having a PSU volunteer in Court hugely assists in aiding the understanding of vulnerable Court users of the complex legal system and its processes, empowering them, helping them to feel less disadvantaged, reducing the prospects of disrupting the process and assisting in facilitating that party in engaging effectively in the dispute."*

The PSU is the only organisation providing this service in the civil and family courts on a daily basis. It opened its doors in West London on 18th October, helping four people on that day alone.

The PSU Manager in the West London Family Court is Klara Slater and she can be contacted to arrange appointments, discuss volunteering opportunities or for general enquiries on

020 8831 3573 or wlf@thepsu.org.uk



How you can help: **Volunteer for us:** Become a volunteer and help the many people facing court alone. (www.thepsu.org/support/volunteer-for-us)

Donate: Donate online (www.thepsu.org/support/donate) or by a cheque made payable to 'Court Based Personal Support'. PSU, Royal Courts of Justice, Strand, WC2A 2LL.