

JFK NEWS

NEWSLETTER

JANUARY -

JULY 2009



Welcome to our first ever newsletter! As you can see it's been an eventful past 6 months.

JFK WINS THE UNA PADEL AWARD 2008

JFK was delighted to win the Una Padel Organisation award from the Center for Crime and Justice Studies in January 2009.

Receiving this award is a real honour for JFK. The annual Una Padel Award was established as a way of giving recognition to organisations working tirelessly at the unglamorous end of the criminal justice system. In her acceptance speech Director Shauneen Lambe described why winning the award was such a privilege for JFK:

"In our work you can often feel under appreciated, so being recognized and supported in this way makes a huge difference and is incredibly encouraging."



Shauneen Lambe with Una Padel's mother who presented the award

JERMAIN IS 'THE BLACK BOY OF DISTINCTION'

Later in January, Jermaine Noon proved that it isn't only JFK staff that can win awards but our clients too when he received the Black Boy of Distinction Award from the National Black Boys Can Association.



Jermain giving his acceptance speech

Jermain is a former client of JFK who has worked hard to turn his life around. His childhood was by no means an easy one. In 2006 Jermaine's offending reached the point where the youth justice system labeled him a 'Persistent Young Offender'. Then, in 2007 he was made homeless.

Jermaine knew something needed to change and so began to work with us to turn his life around. With our help, he got himself a driving license and, after undertaking a 14 week training program he secured himself a full-time job with the National Grid.

That was over a year ago. Jermain now rents his own flat and owns a car. In his spare time he is pro-active ambassador for Just for Kids Law, helping us out wherever he can.

Jermain received a standing ovation when he received the award and was likened to Barack Obama by Lee Jasper, the race equality campaigner presenting the award. We are very proud of him.

HEMINI RUNS FOR OUR HARDSHIP FUND



Hemini Patel's Picture in local paper the London Informer

In May Hemini Patel, a solicitor in the Youth Department, successfully completed the BUPA 10K run for JFK. Hemini raised a grand total of £745, all of which went to the JFK Hardship fund.

The hardship fund allocates a maximum of £250 to JFK clients with urgent financial needs who, without our assistance, would have no legitimate means of getting money. The fund has been used for a wide variety of hardship need from buying driving lessons to beds for two kids who previously were sleeping on the floor.

We'd like to take this opportunity to say a big thank you to Hemini, her fundraising has generated enough money to create hardship funds for three new kids in need.

OUR EDUCATION AND COMMUNITY CARE DEPARTMENT

Laura Orger, an Education and Community Care solicitor, joined us in September 2009 in a position funded by the Dunstone Trust. Since then she has established a successful Education and Social Care department with a busy case load.

Below is an example of Laura's work which demonstrates the huge value of the work that this department takes on.

James' Story

James is 17. When he was 12 his mother became addicted to crack cocaine. As a result of neglect he lost a lot of weight, some of his teeth decayed, he developed a severe skin condition and became very withdrawn. When he was 16 the police closed down the crack den that was his home and he was made homeless. He was placed in an adult homeless persons hostel with Class A drug users. He was extremely vulnerable and did not realize he was entitled to benefits or how to get them. He had no income and became involved in crime and was remanded to Feltham YOI. Shortly after his release he contacted us. We issued a Judicial Review against the Local Authority for failing to support and accommodate a vulnerable child in line with their duties under s20 of the Children Act 1989. They then agreed to support and accommodate him appropriately.

YOUTH ADVOCACY

We were also joined by Ernestina Amanfo, a Youth Advocate, in September 2008. Ernestina has her own case load as well as supporting Laura Orger with the education and community care cases.

Here is an example of a case in which her work has complemented Laura Orger's legal work:

John's Story

John became homeless at the age of 18. He was refused a hostel placement because he did not have a National Insurance Number. Without a National Insurance Number John could not claim housing benefit or council tax benefit. In addition, John was unable to apply for certain jobs. Ernestina Amanfo began negotiations with the Jobcentre, obtained all the relevant documentation and ensured that John attended the necessary meetings. When administrative setbacks occurred she insisted that the Jobcentre Manager stepped in to speed things up. She then negotiated with the central Jobcentre office to ensure that John was not penalised for the mishap. Consequently, John's application was successfully processed within a week. John was then able to apply for Housing benefit. He received a hostel placement shortly after.

SPREADING OUR MESSAGE

Youth Justice Training

We've recently increased the number of training days that we run at law schools and barrister's chambers around the country. Our legal director Aika Stephenson has also been giving talks to prospective young legal aid lawyers on behalf of the Legal Services Commission. Her talks are aimed at inspiring young lawyers to specialise in youth justice and how to do this within the constraints of legal aid.

Fair Trials International

In June Shauneen Lambe spoke to a conference of European lawyers at Nottingham University about vulnerable young people in the English legal system.

Law in Action

Later in June Shauneen Lambe spoke on Radio Fours 'Law in Action' programme on 16th June 2009 about the age of criminal responsibility. You can listen to this programme at:
<http://www.bbc.co.uk/programmes/b0010z36>

Justice/ Sweet & Maxwell Conference

Shauneen then went on to speak at a conference with His Honour Judge Peter Rook about special measures and vulnerable defendants.

FORTHCOMING EVENTS:

Mental Capacity and Young People in the Criminal Justice System, Garden Court Chambers, Thursday 16th July 2009, 6-9pm

This seminar will involve talks from Shauneen Lambe, Maya Sikand, a barrister at Garden Court Chambers, Dr Elieen Vizard, a consultant child and adolescent psychiatrist and research director at NSPCC National Clinical and Treatment Service and Honorary Senior Lecturer at UCL.

Children Rights Day, Garden Court 24th September 2009

Shauneen Lambe will be speaking at this event, for more information see:

http://www.gardencourtchambers.co.uk/news/news_detail.cfm?iNewsID=479