

Lady Chief Justice celebrates next chapter of West Midlands 'legal hub'

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MEDIA RELEASE

Lady Chief Justice celebrates next chapter of West Midlands 'legal hub'

Yesterday, 22nd January, the Lady Chief Justice, The Right Honourable the Baroness Carr of Walton-on-the-Hill, officially opened the new office of Central England Law Centre (CELC).

The Law Centre is one of the largest of its kind in the country: a local charity, part of a national network of centres that employ lawyers to help local residents protect their homes, livelihoods and loved ones. Every year, CELC helps around 10,000 people with information, advice and representation.

Baroness Carr, the most senior judge in England and Wales, has also hailed the Law Centre's professional contribution, of helping people along in their legal careers and strengthening the social welfare law profession.

The Law Centre's new office is conveniently located opposite Coventry Combined Court, and the opening event was attended by senior local judges. The site is intended to be the home of Central England Law Centre's Coventry branch for the next ten years at least. The Law Centre also operates a branch in Tyseley, Birmingham.

Central England Law Centre's 45-strong legal team includes 11 trainee solicitors and 8 solicitors who qualified with the Law Centre. A further 12 solicitors qualified with the Law Centre and went on to social welfare law in other places. The Law Centre's CEO, Elayne Hill, is also a sitting employment judge and seven other past team members have gone on to become judges.

To meet growing demand for its services, Central England Law Centre collaborates with three local universities. It delivers seven legal advice clinics with help from over two hundred student volunteers. In attendance at the opening event were representatives from Coventry University, the University of Warwick and Birmingham City University.

Next year, Central England Law Centre will celebrate 50 years of supporting local people to access justice. Its patron, former justice minister Lord Bach, has reflected on this legacy at the event.

Key to the Law Centre's origin and continuing success is its partnership with the local council. Chief executive of Coventry City Council, Julie Nugent, spoke of this background and of the council's support for the Law Centre.

Importantly, Central England Law Centre takes a joined-up approach, as a legal hub capable of solving clients' legal problems holistically. One in five clients presenting with a legal issue are supported by multiple teams, helping them to resolve various aspects of their problems and to move from crisis to stability.

Lady Chief Justice, Baroness Carr, said:

'One of the most pressing and critical priorities of our justice system is ensuring fair and equal access to justice.'

'And here is where this wonderful Law Centre comes in. It has never wavered from its focus on improving individual lives of those in the communities that it serves.'

Dr Sarah Raistrick, chair of Central England Law Centre, said:

'Central England Law Centre's new centrally located office is a symbol of its flourishing partnerships. The Law Centre is at the heart of an advice ecosystem which educates people about their rights, helps people to access them, and works to build a better society by changing the law. We are excited to build on our success in this new chapter.'

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Central England Law Centre

Photo caption:

From left to right:

Julie Nugent, chief executive of Coventry City Council; Claire Stern, deputy chief executive of Central England Law Centre; Councillor Abdul Jabbar, Coventry City Council; Lord Bach, patron of Central England Law Centre; Baroness Carr, the Lady Chief Justice of England and Wales; Dr Sarah Raistrick, chair of Central England Law Centre, Douglas Wright MBE DL, High Sherriff of the West Midlands

Notes to editors:

- Central England Law Centre is a local legal assistance charity based in Coventry and Birmingham. It has been serving the local community for 48 years and is a member of the Law Centres Network. [Central England Law Centre](#)
- Law Centres Network is the national membership body for Law Centres. A Law Centre is a law practice that is a charity, supporting disadvantaged people with legal problems arising from their disadvantage, such as in housing, benefits, discrimination and immigration. There are 42 Law Centres, the first of which have opened in 1970. [Home | LCN \(lawcentres.org.uk\)](#)

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