

We've been around a long time.

The Birmingham Law Centre has a long history. We've been fighting for social justice challenging poverty since 1916.



“It is quite clear that for many years to come, in spite of the extension of State help, there will be a large sphere for voluntary social effort in the city of Birmingham. It is to meet this need that the Citizens' Society exists.”

From the 13th Annual Report (1928) of the Birmingham Citizens' Society, which was the Birmingham Law Centre's predecessor

A brief history of the Birmingham Law Centre

The Birmingham Law Centre originates in the Charity Organisation Societies, which were a reaction to poverty and the Poor Laws at the turn of the last century. In 1916 the **Birmingham Citizens' Society** took over their work.

After the Second World War the Birmingham Council for Social Service took on the work of the Citizens' Society. Much of this was carried out by the Personal Services Committee, which became known as **Personal Service** (now as part of the Birmingham Voluntary Service Council). Despite the existence of the welfare state, there were still many families in Birmingham who lived in poverty and needed assistance.

Rising personal debt in the 70s and 80s led to the creation of a debt counselling service. The advice work diversified to meet the continuing need in the City and, in 1995 Personal Service was re-launched as **Birmingham Money Advice and Grants (B-MAG)**.

B-MAG subsequently became independent, continued to diversify and profited from the new Legal Aid franchises. It developed its identity as a multi-ethnic advice agency, helping people in need in Birmingham from many different cultures and communities.

This period marked the start of a Law Centre ethos when volunteers were trained in-house. Members of staff qualified as lawyers, who are still with the organisation. Finally, in 2007, **the Birmingham Law Centre** was launched at the Birmingham Council House.



The Birmingham Law Centre is now the only Law Centre in the city. Poverty in Birmingham and the need for advice and assistance has not gone away so, whatever the future holds, it will remain true to its original values of challenging poverty and fighting for social justice for the citizens of Birmingham.

The Birmingham Law Centre

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“At the present time Birmingham is enjoying a period of exceptional prosperity and consequently there is a general impression that there is no distress in the city. This, however, is not borne out by the experience of the society.”

From the first Annual Report (1916) of the Birmingham Citizens' Society