

SHU Law: Give and learn

Sheffield Hallam University's new law firm is aiming to meet the unmet legal needs of the local community in South Yorkshire

Since the granting of its licence in January 2019, SHU Law has been going from strength to strength. Set up to enable Sheffield Hallam University (SHU) students to work on real-life cases in a regulated environment, the practice has been seeking to advance its access to justice ethos for clients and further opportunities for our students.

SHU Law has been keen to promote its desire to work with others in the legal and pro bono sectors. The firm hasn't been established with a view to be a competitor to law firms working in the Yorkshire legal market, but rather to build relationships with those firms on the basis that its 'not-for-profit' status gives it a unique position in the market, enabling it to offer an alternative solution to clients who might be struggling to secure themselves a solicitor.

While SHU Law publicises its services and student activities through its website (www.shulaw.co.uk), the firm is looking to service the currently unmet legal needs of the local community in South Yorkshire. This means that over the past few months the firm has been exploring opportunities of how it can service work that other law firms cannot take on (either because it is not their area of expertise or the work is simply not profitable), and has seen the firm develop a caseload in anticipation of the start of the October semester.

However, relationships with other firms aren't simply about encouraging referrals. They're also about developing an understanding of what skills and knowledge future employers want to see from graduating SHU law students.

"We have met with over 20 law firms alone during the past few weeks to look at how we can 'collaborate to innovate' with conversations focusing around how these prospective employers can help us to ensure that the applied learning experience equips students with the transferable skills to stand out in the marketplace," explains Sally Mallinson Ayres, a solicitor who helps manage SHU Law.

"These are law firms over and above those that we already work with. There is a genuine interest in what we are doing, with firms telling us that there is a need for not only academic attainment in the legal profession but also the ability to have the practical knowledge and skills required for what can often be a very demanding sector to work in"

Mallinson Ayres, along with her colleague Rebecca Draper, are employed specifically to run SHU Law, which means that the firm has legal expertise on hand throughout the summer while the students are off. The service provided by the firm isn't interrupted



by breaks in term time and it operates all year-round. During the summer, the solicitors are being assisted by students who are undertaking the LLM in legal professional practice. They are able to work on cases involving commercial disputes, employment tribunal claims and criminal

injuries compensation claims, as well as assist with research and drafting of materials relevant to the development of the business.

The firms' employment lawyer, Fanny Forest, has been helping students to look at the provision of public legal education for refugees seeking to work in the UK so that they can understand the issues that they may face and where they can get help. Through activities such as these, the firm cascades information, thus extending access to justice for those that need it the most.

The High Sheriff of South Yorkshire, John Pickering, attended SHU Law on 22 July to learn more about what SHU Law has been doing and the projects it is looking to develop with local charities and organisations. Students were on hand to tell him about the work that they have been doing with the Society of Mediators and how they have the opportunity to represent the student voice in the development of SHU Law by being members of the SHU Law Circle.

The SHU Law Circle has been assisting the management team with the marketing of the business and Dominic Cook (pictured) attended a recent event with LawWorks to celebrate this new membership and examine ways of assessing the impact of the work being done by the firm. SHU Law has also recently become a member of the Association of Personal Injury Lawyers and the Chamber of Commerce.

The undergraduate students embarking on their second year of study on the law and law and criminology courses at SHU this coming October will have the opportunity to work on criminal appeals, prison-related law, personal injury claims, research and practice policy, commercial dispute resolution, employment law and small claims matters. They have already undergone their ethics and induction training in preparation for this to ensure that SHU maintains the highest standards of client care and complies with the Solicitors Regulation Authority requirements surrounding confidentiality.

If law firms do have cases that they can't take, SHU Law may be in a position to help that disappointed client. To speak to a member of the legal team, please call 0114 255 6666.