



Free Legal Advice Centre

Partner with us to
tackle inequality



Toynbee Hall

For a fairer future **Since 1884**

Free Legal Advice Centre (FLAC)

Established in 1898, FLAC is the world's longest-running free legal advice service.

It was founded as the 'Poor Man's Lawyer' service at Toynbee Hall in East London to address the stark inequalities in access to justice that left many without recourse to legal support.

Today, FLAC remains at the heart of Toynbee Hall's services, providing vital, high-quality legal assistance to people facing complex challenges, from housing disputes to employment rights.

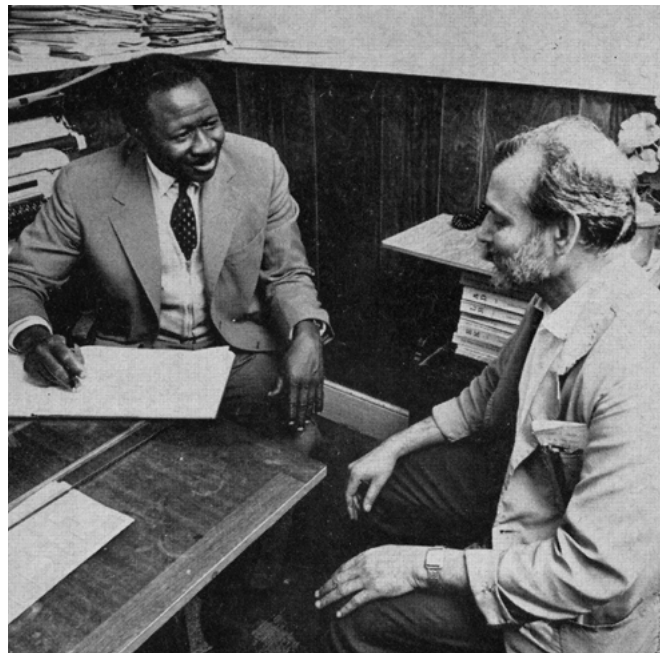
Through FLAC, we bridge the gap between legal needs and resources, ensuring justice is accessible to those in need.

About Toynbee Hall

Since 1884, Toynbee Hall has been a pioneer in addressing social injustice, tackling poverty, and creating opportunities for vulnerable communities in East London and beyond.

Based in Aldgate East, in the London Borough of Tower Hamlets, we have a mission to build a fairer society. Toynbee Hall combines direct support with systemic change, working collaboratively with partners to empower people and advocate for equity.

For over 140 years, our work continues to shape policies and transform lives, ensuring that those most in need have the tools to thrive.



The need

Cuts to legal aid and systemic barriers have created a justice gap, leaving countless individuals without the support they need.

According to the Law Society, 37% of the population now live in areas without a local legal aid provider for housing law.

The Ministry of Justice reports that eligibility for legal aid has decreased by a staggering 80% since 2012.



FLAC exists to fill this void, offering free, expert advice to those who need it most.

FLAC's impact extends beyond individual cases. Each year, the Centre empowers hundreds of clients by helping resolve critical legal issues, safeguard homes and protect jobs.

FLAC's volunteers help reduce financial insecurity and emotional distress, strengthening greater community resilience.



Carrie Morrison

In 1923, Carrie Morrison qualified as the first female solicitor. This was after the Sex Disqualification (Removal) Act of 1919 removed the bar preventing women from training and qualifying.

Nevertheless, like other women who qualified around that time, she found real barriers accessing paid work within the legal profession.

Instead, immediately after qualifying she volunteered her time at Toynbee Hall as part of the Poor Man's Lawyer service – alongside her husband and Toynbee Hall resident, Ambrose Appelbe.

The Law Society has named a room in their offices after her.

What FLAC offers

The Free Legal Advice Centre at Toynbee Hall bridges the gap left by legal aid cuts. Our tailored approach focuses on:

- Delivering high-quality advice in critical areas of need, such as housing, and employment.
- Partnering with leading law firms to leverage their expertise and expand our reach.
- Empowering people to navigate the legal system confidently, safeguarding their rights and dignity.

We offer one-to-one meetings 46 weeks of the year at Toynbee Hall. We also offer advice via sound-proof video advice kiosks based in libraries, GP surgeries and even a prison.

These areas represent the majority of FLAC's current provision. Existing partnerships meet significant demand, but the need continues to outpace resources, creating opportunities for new partners to expand capacity.



From Toynbee Hall's 2023-24 Impact report

What we want to offer

We see clear gaps across several critical areas of law, which could be addressed with the support of additional partnerships:

- **Family law:** Helping individuals with child custody, domestic violence, and family breakdowns.
- **Immigration:** Supporting visa applications, asylum claims, and family reunification for one of the UK's most diverse populations.
- **Education law:** Assisting families navigating disputes over school admissions, exclusions, and access to special education services.
- **Discrimination cases:** Addressing systemic unfairness in workplaces, education, and public services.
- **Consumer rights:** Protecting individuals from predatory lending and unfair practices in a rapidly changing economy.

37% of London's population lives in legal aid deserts without local housing law providers (The Law Society, 2024).¹

Over 50% of those seeking legal housing support in 2022 were turned away due to capacity issues (Today's Conveyancer, 2023).²

Immigration enquiries are rising sharply, reflecting London's diverse demographic needs (London Datastore, 2025).³

By joining us as a partner, you become a vital part of this mission, helping to ensure that no one is left without the support they need to overcome legal challenges.



¹ *Housing – Legal Aid Deserts (2024) The Law Society.* Available at: [Housing – legal aid deserts | The Law Society](#)

² *New free legal advice for people facing eviction or repossession (2023) Today's Conveyancer.* Available at: [Housing legal aid 'critical' as repossessions rise, says Law Society | Today's Conveyancer](#)

³ *Recent migration trends in the UK and London – london datastore (2025) London Datastore News.* Available at: [Recent migration trends in the UK and London – London Datastore](#)

Help us meet the unmet need

FLAC's success is only possible because of the dedication of our pro bono partners, whose expertise and commitment drive this essential work forward.

By partnering with Toynbee Hall to deliver free legal advice through FLAC, your organisation becomes an integral part of the solution to the justice gap.

The impact on society

Unresolved legal problems extend beyond individual hardship, creating a ripple effect on society:

- **Community inequality:** Systemic barriers to justice perpetuate cycles of poverty and inequality, deepening societal divisions.
- **Financial instability:** Without legal intervention, issues such as unlawful evictions or workplace disputes can spiral into severe financial crises.
- **Mental health challenges:** The stress of unresolved legal issues exacerbates mental health problems, contributing to anxiety, depression, and emotional distress.



What becoming a partner means

- **Providing trained legal volunteers:** Commit your legal professionals, trained in the specific area of law we wish to partner on, to regular clinics.

- **Contributing to funding:** Support the operational costs of clinics with a structured annual donation:
 - £15,000 per year for monthly clinics.
 - £45,000 per year for weekly clinics.

- **Ensure compliance:** Work with us to maintain high standards, including adherence to conflict-of-interest policies and professional ethics.

- **Please note:** Our Advice Centre operates 46 weeks per year to allow for holiday closures.

Key partner benefits

Partnering with Toynbee Hall is transformational:

- **Real-life stories** of Toynbee Hall partnerships illustrate the tangible difference you can make, from helping families avoid eviction to ensuring workers receive fair treatment.

- **Rewarding and enriching experiences** for your volunteers, working with diverse clients on meaningful cases.

- **Visible recognition** for your contribution in Toynbee Hall's reports, events, and marketing materials, showcasing your leadership in driving social impact.



“Cleary Gottlieb is extremely proud to have sponsored and staffed the Women’s Free Legal Advice Clinic at Toynbee Hall for nearly 10 years. This is a vital service supporting local women who would otherwise have no recourse to legal support, and provides invaluable experience for the Cleary lawyers who volunteer on Saturday mornings. The clinic enables us to make a real difference to the lives of others and to learn from a team at Toynbee Hall who work so tirelessly to address poverty in London. I would thoroughly recommend getting involved.”

Byron Spring, Pro Bono Managing Attorney,
Cleary Gottlieb Steen & Hamilton LLP

Next steps

Interested?

Contact our Toynbee Hall team to begin the conversation about partnership opportunities.

Email info@toynbeehall.org.uk

We'll arrange a meeting to explore how a partnership matches with your firm's pro bono goals.

We'll work with you to finalise a partnership plan tailored to your firm's capacity and goals.

Thank you for your interest and we look forward to hearing from you.

Together we can bridge the justice gap and empower people to overcome legal barriers.



“In my twenties, at the start of my career as a lawyer, I headed each week to Toynbee Hall’s Free Legal Advice Centre in London’s East End. What I learnt there helping advise people facing mounting debt, eviction or mouldy homes was as much part of my legal education as anything I learnt in the lecture hall.”

“Pro bono work taught me how to advocate, how to give my clients a voice and how to seek redress. It taught me how to be a lawyer..”

Sarah Sackman KC MP, Minister of State in the Ministry of Justice, *Law Society Gazette*, 27 November 2024