

Providing legal advice in a GP practice: how can it make a difference to health and wellbeing?

Submission date 06/06/2016	Recruitment status No longer recruiting	<input type="checkbox"/> Prospectively registered <input type="checkbox"/> Protocol
Registration date 23/02/2017	Overall study status Completed	<input type="checkbox"/> Statistical analysis plan <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Results
Last Edited 15/08/2022	Condition category Other	<input type="checkbox"/> Individual participant data

Plain English summary of protocol

Background and study aims

The circumstances in which people are born, live and work have a significant impact on their health. Recent major changes in Employment and Support Allowance (ESA), Personal Independence Payments (PIP), and the current agenda for social welfare reform in housing benefits and tax credits, have come at a time of recession and financial difficulty for those individuals most reliant on the social welfare system. In these circumstances, the poorest and most vulnerable in society turn to free legal and welfare advice services for help. But these advice services are similarly affected by cuts in local authority funding and the recent loss of free legal aid (financial assistance for those who cannot afford legal fees). Vulnerable patient groups with complex social and legal problems are now faced with few places to seek advice, and there is considerable potential for these problems to overspill into General Practice. Some GPs practices have chosen to pay for free advice services to help patients attending their surgeries with welfare problems, such as housing, unemployment or debt. Advice services have been able to show financial benefit to their users, but there is not much evidence of impact on an their health and their visits to see the doctor. The aim of this study is to find out whether a free legal advice centre located with a GP practice affect health related quality of life, mental wellbeing or health-related behaviour of those who use the service.

Who can participate?

Adults who are a new client at the UCL Legal Clinic during the study period.

What does the study involve?

New clients of the UCL Legal Clinic (a free face-to-face legal and welfare advice centre) are asked to complete a number of questionnaires about their wellbeing before their first free legal advice session. The questionnaires ask about quality of life, mental wellbeing, frequency of GP visits, smoking and alcohol consumption. Three and six months later, participants are asked to repeat the questionnaires to see if there has been any change. The questionnaires take 5-10 minutes to complete in total and can be done in person, by post or over the telephone.

What are the possible benefits and risks of participating?

Participants will be offered a £15 high street voucher in return for their participation when they complete follow-up questionnaires. Those participating in a full-length interview will be offered

a high street voucher to the value of £20 in return for their effort and valuable contribution to the study. There are no notable risks involved with participating in this study.

Where is the study run from?

Sir Ludwig Guttmann Health & Wellbeing Centre (UK)

When is the study starting and how long is it expected to run for?

September 2016 to December 2017

Who is funding the study?

1. University College London (UK)
2. Legal Education Foundation (UK)

Who is the main contact?

1. Ms Sarah Beardon
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2. Dr Matthew Appelby
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Contact information

Type(s)

Public

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Additional identifiers

Protocol serial number

TLEF-2016-000666

Study information

Scientific Title

The Value of Health-Justice Partnerships: Exploring the health impact of free legal advice in a primary care setting

Study objectives

Primary aim:

To investigate how the provision of free legal advice in a primary care setting affects, or is associated with, the health related quality of life for those who use the service

Secondary aims:

1. To investigate the burden of ill health (both mental and physical) among those seeking legal advice.
2. To explore the ways in which ill health (both mental and physical) may be related to having a civil legal problem
3. To quantify whether changes in health status (both mental and physical) can be detected following the receipt of legal advice
4. To explore how health-related behaviours (such as smoking and drinking) may be related to having a civil legal problem
5. To quantify whether changes in health-related behaviours (smoking and drinking) can be detected following the receipt of legal advice
6. To explore whether the receipt of legal advice in a primary care setting is related to GP consultation rate.
7. To explore clients' perspectives on tackling legal problems in primary care settings
8. To explore the perspectives of GP practice staff on the value of the co-located legal advice service to professional practice

Ethics approval required

Old ethics approval format

Ethics approval(s)

London Chelsea NHS Research Ethics Committee, 30/12/2016

Primary study design

Observational

Study design

Single-centre longitudinal observational study

Study type(s)

Quality of life

Health condition(s) or problem(s) studied

Social welfare problems attending general practice

Interventions

This study will recruit clients attending their first legal advice appointment. Participants will complete health and wellbeing questionnaires before their first free legal advice session (baseline) and this will be repeated 3 and 6 months later. The questionnaires will ask about health related quality of life, GP consultation rates, mental wellbeing and health behaviours. Participants will also be asked if they would like to take part in one-to-one interviews exploring the links between legal and health problems. Interviews will also be undertaken with staff of the GP practice addressing impact of legal problems on health and the acceptability of co-located legal advice clinics in primary care settings.

Intervention Type

Other

Primary outcome(s)

1. Health related quality of life is measured using the EQ5D at baseline 3 and 6 months
2. Recipient's GP consultation rate is measured through self-report and validated by GP records where available at baseline 3 and 6 months

Key secondary outcome(s)

1. Mental wellbeing is measured using the Short Warwick-Edinburgh Mental Well-Being Scale at baseline 3 and 6 months
2. Tobacco and alcohol consumption is measured by Quantity-Frequency indices at baseline 3 and 6 months
3. Description of health problems of those seeking legal advice is recorded in client case records at baseline
4. Client perspectives on tackling legal problems in primary care settings are gathered through qualitative semi-structured interviews between 3 and 6 months after recruitment
5. Stakeholders perspectives on tackling legal problems in primary care settings are gathered through qualitative semi-structured interviews from study commencement until 1 year later

Completion date

31/12/2017

Eligibility**Key inclusion criteria**

1. Aged 18 years and over
2. New clients of the UCL Legal Clinic
3. Have had at least one free advice session during the research study period
4. Fluency of English allowing provision of fully informed consent
5. Having the capacity to consent to the research.

Participant type(s)

Other

Healthy volunteers allowed

No

Age group

Adult

Lower age limit

18 Years

Sex

All

Total final enrolment

100

Key exclusion criteria

1. Clients of the UCL Legal Advice Clinic who do not have sufficient fluency in English that allows them to provide fully informed consent
2. Insufficient capacity to consent to research

Date of first enrolment

25/01/2017

Date of final enrolment

31/10/2017

Locations**Countries of recruitment**

United Kingdom

England

Study participating centre

Sir Ludwig Guttmann Health & Wellbeing Centre

40 Liberty Bridge Road

East Village

Olympic Park

Stratford

London

United Kingdom

E20 1AS

Sponsor information

Organisation

University College London

ROR

<https://ror.org/02jx3x895>

Funder(s)

Funder type

University/education

Funder Name

University College London

Alternative Name(s)

University College London in United Kingdom, Collegium Universitatis Londinensis, UCL

Funding Body Type

Government organisation

Funding Body Subtype

Universities (academic only)

Location

United Kingdom

Funder Name

Legal Education Foundation

Results and Publications

Individual participant data (IPD) sharing plan

Anonymised data will be made available where possible following publication in journals. For information about research data availability, please contact Sarah Beardon: sarah.beardon@ucl.ac.uk.

IPD sharing plan summary

Available on request

Study outputs

Output type	Details	Date created	Date added	Peer reviewed?	Patient-facing?
Basic results		03/07/2019	03/07/2019	No	No
Funder report results	Study results start on page 15	01/07/2021	15/08/2022	No	No

