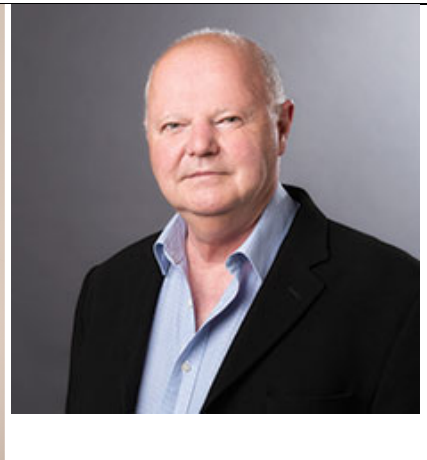


Litigants in Person in Birmingham Civil Justice Centre: Access to Legal Information and Advice

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1. Brief summary of what the research is about.	Following the withdrawal of legal aid in areas such as family law disputes, the numbers of litigants representing themselves (litigants in person, hereafter LiPs) has significantly increased. This has been a cause of concern to Birmingham Civil Justice Centre and Law Society. With their co-operation, a mixed methods study is being undertaken to explore the experience of LiPs, both prior to litigation and at the hearing stage, and in particular the difficulties they encounter with legal discourse. The methods employed comprise questionnaires, interviews and observations. The questionnaire includes questions designed to elicit the bio-demographic details of the litigant in person, type of court case they are involved in, their information-seeking strategies and court experience.

2. What are the research questions?	1. To assess the approximate numbers, demographic profile and financial status of litigants in person in four areas of civil justice namely Family Law, Housing, debt and small claims in the average week, in Birmingham Civil Justice Centre; 2. To investigate the broad nature of their court application; 3. To elicit the reasons for self representation; 4. To evaluate advice and information-seeking strategies 5. To explore the LiPs' experience of dealing with their cases, both prior to and during the court hearing 6. To investigate legal-lay interactions
3. What, if any, outputs so far?	Papers: Socio-Legal Studies Association, 2016, University of Lancaster: 'Litigants in Person in the Civil Justice Centre: Access to Legal Information and Advice' (T. Tkacukova; H. Sommerlad; R. Lee) Socio-Legal Studies Association, 2017, University of Newcastle: 'Litigants in Person in the Civil Justice Centre: Access to Legal Information and Advice' (R. Lee; T. Tkacukova) – see presentation here
4. What outputs are planned?	Articles in Journal of Law and Society and International Journal of Legal Profession
5. What is the anticipated impact?	Although research has been conducted into LiPs (e.g. Trinder, L; Hunter, R; Hitchings, E; Miles, J; Moorhead, R; Smith, L; Sefton, M; Hinchly, V; Bader, K and Pearce, J, <i>Litigants in person in private family law</i> (Ministry of Justice Analytical Series) November 2014) there is still a need for more information on the impact of self representation both on the courts and also on the individual LiP, and in particular on the specific difficulties which legal language and procedures pose for the lay person. This study will go some way to filling this knowledge gap.
6. Comments / additional information / requests for data or input from the broader administrative justice community	