

UK and Ireland Street Law Conference 2022 Review

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Introduction

The UK and Ireland Street Law Conference brings together academics, lawyers, students, and other Street Law enthusiasts to promote, support and celebrate public legal education (PLE) and the progress being made in this important field. Normally held annually, this was the first conference since the outbreak of the Covid-19 pandemic, taking place over the 7th and 8th April 2022 and hosted in Edinburgh by the Law Society of Scotland.

The conference was centred around Street Law's commitment and desire in helping the lay person to 'understand their rights and responsibilities in a world full of increasingly complex and obtuse legal systems.'² The ethos of the conference was to provide a valuable resource within the PLE community for those who were present across the two-day conference and for future guidance. As students and Street Law initiators, it was gratifying to be a piece and player on the chessboard - to interact, connect and understand the multitude of approaches to teaching and learning in a Street Law context. In accordance with the principle of collaboration and to promote open education, this article aims to collate the insightful topics and discussions from the key-note sessions. This article will then move on to discuss the value of the conference from the perspective of students as well as wider stakeholders in PLE programmes. Further, we will explore how

¹ Law students at the University of Sussex

² Sean Arthurs et al, 'From Zero to 60: Building Belief, Capacity and Community in Street Law Instructors in One Weekend' (2017) 24(2) International Journal of Clinical Legal Education 118, 120.

the conference could be improved moving forward with suggestions as to how students and future lawyers and/or professionals, can contribute to PLE in the future.

Summary of the UK and Ireland Street Law Conference, Day 1, Thursday 7th April 2022

Session 1: Counterbalancing Teen Reliance on Social Media News Using Street Law Methodology by Amy Wallace, New York Law School

The opening session of the conference was a fascinating presentation performed by Amy Wallace from New York Law School. Through her research, she showed the dependency of the teenage population on social media to learn about the 'news' and how one can use a Street Law approach to act as a check upon or a corrective device in relation to the source and accuracy of social media versions of 'news' and current affairs. Wallace presented an array of relevant and practical role-play scenarios that would serve usefully for these purposes. Delegates were then split into groups and were given different role-play scenarios, for example a mock legislative hearing, to address contemporary issues or 'news' and then share with the rest of the conference. Overall, this session was a highly educational presentation that demonstrated a range of useful session ideas and delivery methods, completed in the traditional Street Law style of interactive teaching.

Session 2: Environmental Rights & Protection by Alannah Short & Luke McGivern, Law Society of Ireland

Session two offered a highly relevant insight into one particular Street Law programme. First, delegates were offered a handout to read about pollution issues near a school. They were then given an A-Z sheet and had to write down a word for every letter of the alphabet that related to the scenario in terms of environmental rights and protection. This

activity was highly engaging and brought out the creative, even competitive, side of the participants! Overall, the activity enabled conference members to understand the power of a seemingly 'fun' activity that allows an audience to think and learn in a cooperative, constructive and creative way. Reference was then made to other teaching and learning methods that could be linked to the A-Z words such as letter writing and, campaigning. Examples were then given of a case upon which the scenario was based. This session allowed the participants to gain ideas for future sessions as well as better understanding the Street Law style of 'active' learning. This contrasted usefully for us, as students, given that much of our own institutional teaching can be better described as 'passive' – dominated by lectures.

Session 3: Diversity and inclusion: is your PLE project accessible to all of your student body? by Racheal Kirkup & Colleagues, BPP Education Group

One of the important aspects of conducting Street Law projects is ensuring that they are inclusive – and this is what was explored and shared in this session. Following a short presentation on the diversity and inclusion issues faced by the presenters and the mechanisms used to address them, the exercise that followed allowed participants to think about the challenges that teachers and learners may have when facing a diversity or inclusion problem. We were encouraged to list possible sources of internal and external support that may be sought by or directed to students. The main piece of advice given by the speakers was to make the project diverse and inclusive from the outset. In other words, it should be clear from the beginning how students can and should be supported if needs arise. For example, the contact details of the university's Wellbeing Officer can be included in the project's handbook so that in the event of a student having anxiety or panic attacks, they know to whom to reach out. In addition, an array of personal circumstances that may impede students from participating in Street Law projects were noted, including anxiety, costs (such as travel expenses) and limits of

current legal knowledge amongst other things. Student participation in a variety of roles including behind the scenes support should be widely encouraged so that contributions can be made to projects from different perspectives that meet student needs as well as project objectives.

Session 4: Identifying client opportunities and tailoring materials by Kristina Garner, University of East Anglia

Kristina Garner led an insightful session into how Street Law programmes can successfully target, and address clients' needs by tailoring materials to them, reinforcing the idea that Street Law cannot and should not be a 'one size fits all' programme. Garner illustrated the flexibility of Street Law to be able to mould and address the needs of target groups, referring to the world's estimated population she suggested that there are 7.9 billion possibilities as to how Street Law programmes can be set up. The session highlighted the processes and considerations that can be taken to tailor Street Law sessions, beginning with identifying the client base and the opportunities of reaching a diverse number of people within that. For example, in post-sixteen education there are possibilities for Street Law to be set up for sixth forms, apprentices, university students, as well as a wide range of legal issues that may be of significant interest to the particular Street Law community group. It was agreed that an effective way to address this was to conduct client interviews to assess what legal education they believe they could benefit from. Finally, the importance of addressing different delivery methods was stressed – what may be captivating to primary school children may not be as attractive for an adult writers' group. It is important to understand Street Law as a flexible programme and to use its adaptability to tailor to the needs of the client base.

Session 5: Reflections so far by Law Society of Scotland Committee

Following the insightful and fruitful first four sessions of the conference, we regrouped to share our current reflections thus far. The key takeaways included how to effectively design inclusive programmes that were tailored to be adaptable, if necessary, depending on the target audience. To enhance the accessibility of Street Law, it was considered what a suitable 'dosage' of educational material would be. It was noted that spreading out a single topic over several sessions would maximise learning and would enable the facilitators to focus on producing engaging active-based sessions.

Session 6: Keynote Workshop: 'Capturing the learning' - Maximising the educational benefit of Street Law and other forms of PLE by Richard Grimes, University of Edinburgh

Led by Richard Grimes, session six was an enlightening keynote workshop that covered every aspect of an ideal Street Law programme. It specifically focussed on maximising the educational benefit of Street Law. First, the core features of an effective programme were defined. Grimes provided questions to think about regarding one's programme such as: what legal knowledge one will be learning?; what skills have been developed?; what values and teaching outcomes will be created?; and more besides. Then, the discussion focused on who is learning the content, and how to specifically target that audience be they law students, community groups or other stakeholders. The importance of this as well as significance of monitoring learning and how exactly one can do it was emphasised. The value of using specific, measurable, attainable, relevant and time-bound (SMART) learning outcomes that are aligned carefully for each activity, and the keeping of records and documents for evidence was stressed. The session then moved on to the delegates working in small groups to prepare a proposal for a Street Law module to be included in the curriculum and then representatives of each groups had to do a presentation before a mock Board of Studies of a law school to make the case for

accreditation. The session therefore covered basic principles of course outcomes, content, delivery, assessment and evaluation with a hands-on dimension to put it all in context.

Session 7: Sharing Ideas and Innovations - Quickfire Round by Law Society of Scotland Committee

This quickfire session allowed for each participant to reintroduce themselves and give a brief overview of their own Street Law projects. Frances Ridout spoke about the two Street Law projects at Queen Mary University London, 'Sharing and Publishing Images to Embarrass (SPITE)'³ and 'I Am You'⁴. The former involves undergraduate students running workshops on the illegality of image-based sexual abuse and harassment and the latter seeks to educate primary school children on the protected characteristics of the Equality Act 2010, through a series of interactive workshops. The Law Society of Ireland shared a project they had undertaken with children of a similar age, which concerned environmental rights and protection. They began their Street Law workshops by taking the children outside and making them note and appreciate key aspects of their local environment, before returning their focus to the laws that protect the environment. Overall, this session demonstrated the diversity in the structure and execution presented by each Street Law facilitator.

Summary of the UK and Ireland Street Law Conference, Day 2, Friday 8th April 2022

Session 1: Sheffield Hallam and our Street Law programme by Lisa Woolley, Sheffield Hallam University

³ Queen Mary University of London, 'SPITE for schools' < <http://www.lac.qmul.ac.uk/clients/community-projects/spite-for-schools/>> accessed 13 June 2022.

⁴ Queen Mary University of London, 'I am You' < <http://www.lac.qmul.ac.uk/clients/community-projects/i-am-you/>> accessed 13 June 2022.

Sheffield Hallam's Street Law experience was shared in this session by Lisa Woolley. The COVID-19 pandemic moved everyone towards designing and delivering online Street Law sessions and Sheffield Hallam was no different. Woolley explained that the switch was difficult at the start but, with time, they managed to gain momentum. A highlight of their Street Law project in the academic year 2020-21 involved delivery of sessions to primary schools. With this experience, they had significant practical takeaways such as the need for Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS) checks. A few of the schools in which they had planned to deliver the sessions were unable to take part as not everyone had been able to carry out a DBS check. If planning such sessions, it is vital that the DBS check is successfully completed. As Street Law is taught as a module not an extra-curricular activity at Sheffield, Woolley also shared how the module curriculum is structured and how the students are assessed. Finding the most efficient way to assess Street Law projects as a module is challenging, as it is difficult to decide on what exactly is being assessed: the sessions delivered or the work that is done in preparation for the same. The assessment mode adopted at Sheffield is a 3000-word essay and a 1000-word self-reflection piece, in which the research and documents gathered by the students can be used as addenda in the reflective piece.

Session 2: Street Law Scotland: Online lessons in a changing teaching environment by Georgia Turnbull & Robb Marrs, Law Society of Scotland

The pandemic has forced many communities to work and engage online and so, within Street Law, there is a need to learn how to develop an effective online community. In this session, ideas and tips were shared to facilitate building online communities to ensure that the delivery of the Street Law sessions is of high quality and as engaging as the face-to-face sessions. These included carrying out icebreaker and other interactive exercises throughout sessions to keep everyone involved and make the people delivering the sessions even more relatable. The latter point is crucial as virtual sessions can present

obstacles to making a personal connection with audiences – humanising trainers and fostering greater levels of engagement. At the end of the session, a group exercise was done where we were given a hypothetical scenario of a Zoom session of twenty students, and we had to design an online class for the students. Again, it was a demonstration of the range, variety and scope of Street Law work.

Session 3: Copyright: The Card Game by Frances Ridout & Meghan Mizen, Queen Mary University London (QMUL)

Demystifying the law, building confidence accessing the law and promoting learner-centred education are common aims of PLE. In this session, Frances Ridout and Meghan Mizen explained how they used Street Law as the means to achieve these overall aims and to provide greater access to information in the legal and highly technical field of copyright. Engaging delegates in the ‘Copyright: The Card Game,’ Ridout and Mizen demonstrated, yet again at this conference, the importance of producing engaging activities to advance legal education. This literal card game covered the main aspects of copyright in a thorough and captivating manner. Playing the game, target audiences draw cards displaying objects and their copyright status. The implications are then debated using facilitated discussion. This session underlined the important link between copyright and Street Law itself. Street Law, being an open educational practice and available as a shared resource for the benefit of all, engages in open licensing, open access publishing and creative commons. It is, therefore, necessary for all Street Law initiatives to be attuned to this to continue to promote accessibility and spread knowledge.

Session 4: Designing Street Law Lessons – Ingredients in the Secret Sauce by Lee Arbetman, Street Law Inc.

Using the culinary recipe analogy there are key ‘ingredients’ to effective Street Law sessions and Lee Arbetman shared these in this session. He referred to the well-known

learning pyramid which studies suggest show that teaching others can lead to a retention rate of information of up to 90%, a significant improvement when compared to more traditional, often university-style approaches to learning and teaching which consists predominantly of lectures and seminars. Some studies suggest that knowledge retention can be significantly lower under such passive forms of study (5% and 50% respectively).⁵ Street Law's proactive teaching style allows for research, analytical and problem-solving skills when structuring an interactive lesson with relevant material for the specific target audience, ranging from primary school children to adults of all ages, depending on the community group involved. To further unpack the 'secret sauce' to an impactful lesson, Arbetman placed emphasis on the 'dosage' of information being taught to your audience in order to create an interactive lesson, a method which should be preferred to the heavy offloading of knowledge in one sitting. Arbetman's formula made complete sense both as a presentation and in the context of the other PLE work we had heard about at the conference so far.

Session 5: Reflections so far by Law Society of Scotland Committee

The reflection session of the second and final day of the UK and Ireland Street Law Conference 2022 was given by the Law Society of Scotland Committee. They first acknowledged the thought-provoking and open atmosphere of the conference and how such valuable round-table discussions lead to a continuous flow of ideas in the conference room, in turn extending to the global community once ideas are implemented and developed. The Committee also recognised the importance of the 'unlearning process' when it comes to creating a more agile learning environment to deliver Street Law workshops both in person and online. In terms of online teaching, as demonstrated by the earlier session delivered by Georgia Turnbull and Robb Marrs, the paradigm of how

⁵ See: McQuoid Mason, David, 'Introduction to Democracy Education, Best Practices Handbook' (2018) UNDEF, pp 7-8.

a Street Law lesson is shaped in person had to be unlearned to give space for new online teaching tools (e.g., Padlet) and ideas to maintain student engagement.

Session 6: SL and QWE, Linden Thomas & Lucy Blackburn, University of Birmingham & University of Central Lancashire

In light of the Solicitors Qualifying Exam (SQE) being phased in to become the predominant method to qualify as a solicitor in England and Wales – candidates need to ‘complete two years’ full-time (or equivalent) QWE’ which enables aspiring solicitors to gain legal work experience.⁶ Following the reflection session, Linden Thomas and Lucy Blackburn delivered a topical session on the connection between Street Law and Qualifying Work Experience (QWE). Through several quick-fire rounds, delegates worked in small groups to distinguish whether six case studies could be classified to be QWE or not. This was conducted by using the competences guide that the Solicitors Regulation Authority (England and Wales) applies to determine whether an experience constitutes QWE, examples include working with other people, managing yourself and your work, ethics, and professionalism. This session highlighted the value of Street Law and PLE Workshops in aiding students to be critical learners and thinkers and the transferable skills to be applied in future practice as a solicitor.

Session 7: A PLE for Help: Filling Public Legal Education Gaps in Canada by Natasha Jaczek, University of Ottawa

To understand why there has been a lack of PLE in Canada, Jaczek’s session inspired insightful discussion into both the benefits and challenges of setting up a Street Law programme in school settings and in the wider community. Street Law initiatives can be included within the school’s timetable, which in turn makes the programme more

⁶ Solicitors Regulation Authority, ‘Qualifying work experience for candidates’ (SRA, 5 April 2022) <<https://www.sra.org.uk/become-solicitor/sqe/qualifying-work-experience-candidates/>> accessed 9 June 2022.

accessible to a diverse range of pupils. If seen as part of the curriculum, attendance levels should be high. It was noted, as in a previous presentation, that background and security (DBS) checks must be completed to ensure the safeguarding of all concerned. A potential challenge regarding school-based initiatives was maintaining continuity within each school's curriculum and resources are an ever-present issue. Regarding community-based programmes, benefits included, amongst other things, the ability to address a more diverse range of socially relevant legal topics.

Overall, this session successfully concluded the conference with a consistent theme that ran throughout – the importance of clear outcomes for all, the need for interactive learning and teaching, the significance of reflecting community-need in terms of topics covered, the practicalities of establishing and managing a Street Law module and the value of sharing ideas, experiences and 'best practice'.

The overall value of the conference for students and Street Law participants in general

Looking specifically from the students' perspective, the main takeaway from the conference was the high level of participation due to the interactive nature of the sessions that were provided by the speakers – it truly symbolised the ethos of Street Law and its delivery. Given the nature of much, if not most, university teaching, students are conditioned to learn from, and adopt to, a specific way of delivery dominated by lecture-style and PowerPoint assisted presentations. Whilst many universities and other higher education institutions have introduced more student-centred learning opportunities (such as law clinics and Street Law), these are still vastly outnumbered by more traditional forms of knowledge transfer. The conference allowed us, as students, to engage with innovative methods of teaching and learning, showcased by the different presenters. For example, the 'Copyright: The Card Game' session, was the epitome of

demystifying and decoding the law (in this instance being copyright and business law) through an engaging card game. Such sessions enabled us, as students, to better comprehend the underpinnings and structure behind a lesson/project before incorporating the substantive law and applying this, perhaps, to other settings.

From the students' perspective, the conference allowed us, as existing participants in Street Law, to become more aware of the design and mechanics involved in a project rather than just the delivery aspect. Most importantly, it allowed us to gain real insight into the aims and philosophy behind the PLE programmes, which has helped motivate and inspire in a very personal way. The session held by Lee Arbetman on the 'Ingredients in the Secret Sauce' combined with the keynote workshop led by Richard Grimes, which included a simulation of a presentation to a Board to persuade it to support a Street Law Programme, were particularly helpful. These sessions put the rest into context and perspective – giving a foundation on which all else could be appreciated. For us, it made sense of much of the work we had already done back at our law school. It was truly 'doing' and reflecting on the 'doing'. Additionally, this conference gave a basis for us and the potential for other students to truly understand the purpose of Street Law and the chance to be more involved in the process moving forward.

For the Street Law delegates more generally, the conference allowed all to refresh their minds on innovative ways to introduce, develop and/or improve projects. It was agreed during these 2 days that the starting point in designing an effective Street Law session was to identify common aspects of what a successful lesson looks like. In addition, there was useful discussion on the types of activity that can interest and engage different audiences, in particular those based in the school environment, the wider community and a mix between the two (as discussed in Jaczek's session on day two). The topic of dosage of material opened valuable discussion into the several ways Street Law initiatives can

be run effectively, concluding that the focus lay in the captivity of the activities with a lesser focus on providing extensive knowledge in one session.

The inclusion of topical but perhaps not commonly addressed topics for Street Law was another innovative idea that participants at the conference appreciated. For example, copyright and environmental rights were the two of the subjects that stood out as perhaps non-typical matters covered by Street Law sessions.

Aside from being inspirational the conference was an excellent opportunity to network and meet potential collaborators for the future.

How could this conference be improved going forward?

A key suggestion for improvement is to encourage more students to attend the conference. A significant number of the sessions referred to students' contribution and raising questions about how they felt the activity went and could be improved. Without students being well-represented at the conference, an opportunity is missed for such important feedback. Having students present at future events would also allow for a first-hand account of their experiences more generally. Such conferences are a fantastic platform to exchange ideas and discuss common challenges. In the spirit of co-creation and more effective learning and teaching, involving students from the outset would no doubt contribute to more successful Street Law and other PLE projects. Students and facilitators would, thereby, be encouraged to engage in meaningful communication at all developmental stages of projects, as opposed to only giving feedback at the end of particular activities. This could only constructively contribute to PLE work in general and Street Law activity in particular.

Another improvement could be the inclusion of more examples of active Street Law programmes. Whilst the presentations themselves were highly valuable, observing and

taking part in exercises and simulated Street Law work was, for us, an unforgettable experience. It proved to be especially useful as it helped inspire ideas for us to include in our own future programmes whilst also helping us to visualise how projects can be better tailored to serve different audiences and address relevant topics.

Further, in conjunction with an annual Street Law conference, it would be beneficial to have more frequent virtual meetings between universities and the organisations present at the conference. This could create an opportunity for a continuing dialogue on new teaching and learning methods, on potential presentation topics and enabling a more effective sharing of resources that could be useful across the board.

Suggestions as to how students and future lawyers/ professionals, can contribute to Public Legal Education in the future

As future lawyers, or practitioners more broadly, a suggestion as to how one can contribute to PLE could be by volunteering to give inspiring talks to universities about the programme. Just as the conference demonstrated, inspiring students is a powerful tool and connecting students with practitioners enables greater understanding and access to the Street Law community. In continuity with student-focused initiatives, campaigns or taster sessions at universities could be held to increase awareness about educating individuals on legal issues. Raising awareness amongst students generally of access to justice and the role of legal literacy could incentivise them to join the Street Law teams. In turn, creating a positive domino effect, and expanding the reach of Street Law to non-law university students will allow for an increase in people being able to provide workshops to the wider community.

Another way in which students can contribute to PLE in the future is by starting programmes in their local areas. For some of us, one of the reasons we took part in the Street Law project at our university was to learn the building blocks of the project to

create a similar one back in our home country. With this aim in mind, we thoroughly immerse ourselves in the experience and learn as much as we can from it so that we can apply our knowledge elsewhere. With an expanding digital era, creating and presenting free, online, programmes/sessions is another viable option. In such a diverse environment, an online lesson can mean that PLE could be encouraged and accessed by a wider range of audiences and can mean that lawyers/professionals may find it easier to volunteer, compared to in-person sessions, as it does not require travel and is less time consuming.

Conclusion

Prior to the conference, we anticipated a more 2D, presentational-style discussion. Instead, the conference exceeded our expectations and revealed a totally different ballgame. We were presented with a truly captivating 2 days which embraced the Street Law methodology of interactive discussion. From this, we were able to gain a holistic outlook on several different strategies and how one can structure and deliver Street Law sessions to a variety of target audiences. It was enriching to witness Street Law being applied across the board and to see students, academics and other Street Law enthusiasts working and sharing ideas and learning skills to be able to apply in the future.