# Free Legal Advice Scheme Extended

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The University of Birmingham's Law School has once more joined forces with the Birmingham office of law firm Mills & Reeve to provide free legal advice to members of the University's local community.

The launch of Birmingham Free Legal Advice Group (FLAG) follows a successful three-month pilot, which ran earlier this year. Lawyers from Mills & Reeve, working alongside law students, received more than 30 calls to the legal hotline.

Ruth Creed, a senior solicitor at Mills & Reeve, said the volunteer teams – which includes 30 partners, associates and solicitors from the firm - were consulted on a wide range of legal issues, ranging from matrimonial and family disputes, wills, employment to a query regarding an allotment.

She said: "The cut-backs in public funding mean that more people are finding it difficult to access legal advice".

"The scheme is also a great learning experience for the students who take part in it: as well as solving legal problems they get a chance to interact with the public, just as they would in legal practice. More than 200 applied for 50 places on the scheme."

The extended Birmingham FLAG scheme will now run in the Autumn (until 17 December 2010) and Spring (17 January – 1 April) terms, from 5pm-7pm each Thursday.

Following the pilot the scheme has been more widely promoted by the students through community centres, libraries, GP surgeries, a poster campaign and leaflet drop. Members of the public wishing to access the legal advice team ring a hotline (0121 415 8812) or send an email to BirminghamFLAG@contacts.bham.ac.uk. They are then given an appointment to meet at the law clinic at the University, where they will be interviewed by law students, supervised by lawyers from Mills & Reeve. A letter of advice is then issued.

Bharat Malkani, a lecturer in the Law School and the Clinic Director at the University, said: "The University of Birmingham has a long and proud tradition of working with, and for, the local community, and the law clinic is a fantastic means of helping those members of the community who need legal help but cannot afford it."

**Ends**

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