

Centre for Law & Social Justice
The School of Law
Leeds University

**Legal Entitlements and Problem-
Solving (LEaP) Project**

Delivering legal rights through practical problem solving

Annual Report for 2021



The Cerebra LEaP Leeds Research team

Professor Luke Clements, Cerebra Professor of Law



In 2016 Luke joined the School of Law at Leeds University as the Cerebra Professor of Law & Social Justice.

Luke practiced as a solicitor between 1981 and 2021, and has extensive experience of advising disabled people and their carers concerning the rights to social welfare support; he has written widely concerning these rights and provided advice to a number of independent, charitable and public bodies.

Dr Ana Laura Aiello Cerebra Doctoral Researcher



In 2019 Dr Ana Laura Aiello joined the Cerebra LEaP research team at Leeds. Ana studied law and human rights in Argentina, Spain and in the UK (obtaining her PhD at Leeds University). She has worked for a number of international NGOs (including Amnesty International, Disability Rights International and CHANGE) and at universities in Argentina, Spain and the UK. Ana has a sister with learning disabilities and experience of co-working with disabled people in an accessible & inclusive way.

The Cerebra LEaP in-house research team

Beverley Hitchcock

Beverley is the Acting Head of Research and Information at Cerebra where she additionally coordinates (among other things) the development of the 'Accessing Public Services Toolkit' and the dissemination workshops that consider the Toolkit throughout England, Wales and Scotland (discussed below).



Carys Hughes

Carys is the Cerebra LEaP project co-ordinator. Carys is the Leeds programme's link with the Cerebra in-house research team. Her expertise is pivotal in responding to requests for specialist advice and then identifying commonly occurring problems on which the LEaP team can undertake in depth research.



Derek Tilley

Derek is the Senior Development Officer with the Cerebra in-house research team. Derek's research (which is also central to his PhD studies) concerns the barriers that disabled children and their families experience in accessing their legal entitlements to education, health and social care services.



John Furlong

John is the Cerebra LEaP project Information and Support Officer. He undertakes case work, workshops and fulfils a policy role within the team. He previously worked as a paralegal in the education department of a legal aid law firm, has volunteered for an SEN charity and campaigned to improve access to education and social care for children with disabilities



Student Advisers

The LEaP project has again benefitted from the research expertise of our pro bono student volunteers – numbering 48 in 2021 and to whom we are most grateful. They will all be named in the research publication that they are helping to produce.



Particular thanks are due to:

Colleagues from Cerebra, the Disability Law Service, the Parent and Carer Alliance and the law firm Scott-Moncrieff & Associates Ltd who have contributed to the training and support of the student volunteers as part of the current research programme. From Cerebra, thanks to Beverley Hitchcock, Carys Hughes, Derek Tilley, John Furlong and Derek Spinks; from the Disability Law Service, thanks to Priya Bahri and David Laurence, from the Parent and Carer Alliance, thanks to Louise Arnold and Lucy Fullard and from Scott-Moncrieff & Associates Ltd, thanks to Mitchell Woolf. Finally, thanks to the parents of disabled children who provided webinar support for the training of the student volunteers – but who, for reasons of confidentiality, we have agreed not to name.

Annual Report 2021

Cerebra Legal Entitlements and Problem-Solving Project

Summary of achievements in 2021

1. The collaboration between the LEaP Project team at the School of Law, Leeds University and the Cerebra in-house research team has continued, with the Leeds team:
 - (a) providing expert input concerning specific challenges encountered by families in accessing their legal entitlements;
 - (b) helping to identify commonly occurring problems on which in-depth research can be undertaken at Leeds; and
 - (c) designing and then undertaking in-depth research on a commonly occurring problem: analysing the findings to identify implementation measures and good practice lessons that can reduce the prevalence / impact of these problems.
2. The completion of the first phase of the research programme investigating the origins, prevalence and impact of 'parent carer blame' policies and practices in England with the publication in July 2021 of ['Institutionalising Parent Carer Blame'](#).
3. The development of an implementation strategy to bring about practical change to address the legal failings identified by the 2021 report – and the taking of early practical action in accordance with this strategy.
4. Working with the Disability Law Service (and with support from a major City legal firm) in corresponding with the local authorities identified in the 2020 'Autism Plus' report (authorities that discriminated against disabled children and young people with autism) with the aim of ensuring that their policies were changed.
5. The commencement of the second phase of the 'parent carer blame' research which has involved the collection of further quantitative and qualitative data concerning the local policies that create and perpetuate 'parent carer blame' practices, and (among other things) supporting independent parent carer groups in their discussions with their local authorities to effect the necessary changes identified in the 2021 research.
6. The LEaP Project teams at the School of Law, Leeds University and the Cerebra in-house research team have continued, where practical opportunities arise, to take action to implement the recommendations that have been made in earlier LEaP research reports.

These achievements are considered in more detail in the pages that follow.

Annual Report 2021

Legal Entitlements and Problem-Solving (LEaP) Project

LEaP is an innovative problem-solving project that helps families of children with brain conditions cope with the legal barriers they face.

Background

The laws of the four nations of the UK place enforceable duties on public bodies to provide a range of social welfare supports for disabled children and their families.

The research evidence suggests that disabled children and their families experience considerable difficulties in accessing these rights and in consequence, in accessing good quality health, social care and educational provision.

In 2013 Cerebra funded a pilot programme at Cardiff Law School to identify accessible and effective procedures that could enable disabled children and their families to maximise the benefit of their legal entitlements.

The pilot research identified a number of commonly occurring problems encountered by disabled children and their families when seeking to access their statutory entitlements. It also provided tangible evidence that effective mechanisms could be developed to address a number of these problems and thereby lead to material improvements in the wellbeing of many disabled children and their families.

In 2014 Cerebra awarded research funding to the project including the endowment of a Cerebra Chair in Law and Luke Clements became the first Law Professor to be awarded a prestigious Cerebra Chair. In January 2016 the research programme moved from Cardiff to the School of Law at Leeds University.

The LEaP project currently comprises three relatively distinct (but interconnected) components, which can be broadly described as:

- (1) research involving individual advice and support;
- (2) research of a specific nature concerning a commonly encountered legal problem; and
- (3) research concerning the practical application of emerging theories of problem solving and 'resilience building'.

1. The 'individual advice and support' research strand

Since the inception of the LEaP research programme, the Cerebra in-house research team has developed considerable expertise in dealing with the majority of 'commonly occurring' problems without the need for these to be referred to the Leeds University team. This has been beneficial for the families who make contact with Cerebra as the 'turn around' time for advice is much shorter. It has also enabled the *pro bono* student researchers to focus on specific commonly encountered problems (discussed in the next section).

Notwithstanding the legal expertise gained by Cerebra in-house team, on occasions it receives referrals on which additional input/advice is required and for which the Leeds team provides necessary expert input.

Individual referrals are of vital importance to the research, since the advice that is provided to families incorporates the problem-solving methodologies developed by the programme. This process has identified 'legal confidence' as one of the important elements that enable disabled children and their families to develop 'resilience' and the ability to persevere with the multiple challenges they face in obtaining their statutory entitlements to health, social care and educational support. This in turn requires that there be a range of high quality, up-to-date and accessible guides to the law. In addition to supporting the development and publication of the Cerebra guides, the LEaP Project has provided support for the enlargement of the Cerebra '[Template Letters](#)' library – which is one of the best UK based resources of its kind for families seeking to secure access to their legal rights to support.

2. The 'specific' *pro bono* student led research strand

The drafting and publication of the 2021 'Parent Carer Blame' research study.

Analysis of the requests for advice received by the Cerebra in-house research team identifies commonly occurring legal problems encountered by families. These problems inform and direct in-depth research by the Leeds LEaP team – with a view to ascertaining their nature and prevalence and the legal context out of which they arise. The purpose of the research is to develop innovative ways of resolving such problems at 'root' – so that (ideally) they cease to be encountered by individual families.

For the last 18 months the LEaP Project has focused its research on an issue of great concern to many families who have made contact with the Cerebra in-house team. Parents who sought support from their local children's services departments to enable their family to cope with the difficulties that arose as a consequence of their child's impairment, considered that they were being treated in exactly the same way as a parent for whom the authority had cogent evidence of neglect / abuse. Instead of a supportive response that recognised that parenting a child with complex needs can be extremely challenging, the default position of such authorities when asked to provide support, was to regard this as evidence of parental inadequacy.

The initial data gathering phase of the research study, which commenced in October 2020, was undertaken by 48 *pro bono* student volunteers and has been described in our [2020 Annual Report](#).

3. The analysis, publication and implementation of the 2021 'Institutionalising Parent Carer Blame' research report

In the first part of 2021 a detailed analysis of the data was undertaken by Professor Luke Clements and Dr Ana Laura Aiello resulting in the publication of the '[Institutionalising Parent Carer Blame](#)' research report in July 2021.

The 52 page research report identified major policy and practice failings in the way that English Children's Services authorities discharged their legal

obligations to disabled children and their families. It called for urgent action to be taken to address its findings, including:

- The publication of separate statutory guidance to address the specific needs of disabled children and their families in the assessment, eligibility and care support planning process – as the research had concluded that central government guidance ‘Working Together 2018’ was not fit for purpose in relation to their needs.
- The inclusion within the new statutory guidance of a requirement that assessments of disabled children and their families be undertaken by assessors who, through training and experience, have the necessary knowledge and skills of the particular condition (such as autism, learning disabilities, sensory impairments mental health needs or other conditions).
- The need for explicit acknowledgment that local assessment protocols (as currently drafted) should not be used when assessing and care managing the needs of disabled children and their families (in cases where there is no cogent evidence of neglect or abuse).

The research report was endorsed by the Rt. Hon. Sir Edward Davey MP who called for, among other things, urgent action to be taken by the Secretary of State for Education ‘to address this issue as a matter of urgency’. The report achieved substantial press and media coverage, brief details of which can be found at Appendix 1 to this report.

The research findings were of such concern, that it was decided that the 2021-22 research programme would focus on ‘implementation’: ie on ensuring that the necessary changes to policy and practice materialised. A review of the literature concerning ‘theories of change’ suggested that effecting meaningful change (ie change in the way families were treated by Children’s Services authorities) required a multi-stranded approach, comprising (for example):

- Action to raise awareness of the problem (for example through the use of local and national media, webinars and face-to-face meetings with families and key actors);
- Opening discussions with senior policy makers within local and central government; convening discussion groups with parent carers and their independent organisations as to what would constitute ‘fit for purpose’ policies and practices.
- Providing support to independent parent carer groups to enable them to have meaningful discussions with their councils to bring about changes in their policies and practices. Examples of such support to include the provision of briefings on the ‘fitness for purpose of their council’s relevant policies; the level of relevant training its assessors had received etc;
- Providing assistance to independent parent carer groups to support the development of a set of principles / key needs that would underpin revised policies and practices;
- Developing templates as to the content of education and training programmes that would accompany the introduction of these new policies and practices (including revised digital procedures for the new assessment / care planning programmes).

During the second part of 2021 Professor Luke Clements and Dr Ana Laura Aiello were heavily occupied in implementation activities of the above kind, both at a local and at the national level. These included a discussion with the Chief Social Worker for Children and Families in England (whose 2021 report is cited in the 'Institutionalising Parent Carer Blame' research) and a discussion with officials supporting the 'Independent review of children's social care' (the 'MacAlister Review'). An outline of some of their 'public facing' discussions – predominantly in webinars – is provided at the end of this report (pages 9 – 10).

4. The 'specific' 2021 *pro bono* student led research strand

As part of the second phase of the study, in October 2021 the LEaP project benefitted from the research expertise of 48 of our *pro bono* student volunteers. Their research focussed on: (1) acquiring data concerning the human rights / disability awareness training local authority assessors had received (through the use of Freedom of Information requests); (2) evaluating the accessibility of key local authority children's services assessment and care planning documents (through the use of standard questionnaires); and (3) capturing extracts of key local authority web-based policies (by way of 'screenshots / screengrabs'). This data will be analysed by Professor Luke Clements and Dr Ana Laura Aiello during the first part of 2022 with a view to the publication of a report on the research findings in the Spring of 2022.

The involvement and expertise of our *pro bono* student volunteers is not only invaluable for the LEaP programme (in facilitating the collection of a significant 'data set') it is also considered by the students themselves to be a hugely enriching experience. In this context, students refer not only to the research skills they acquire during the programme but also to the personal insights they gain from witnessing – first-hand – the challenges families experience when trying to access their legal entitlements – and of being able to see the inspirational work undertaken by Cerebra. Appendix 4 to this report includes a selection of feedback comments received from the students in December 2021.

This phase of the research is on-going and will be subject of next year's annual report

5. The problem solving and 'resilience building' research strand

As noted in previous annual reports, a key objective of the LEaP research project is to critically analyse the knowledge gained from the individual advice and the generic research strands in order to achieve a practical understanding of why commonly occurring legal problems arise and to devise practical mechanisms to overcome these difficulties.

In 2015, with the administrative and organisational support from Cerebra and an ESRC Impact Acceleration Award, a 'Toolkit' was prepared that summarised the main problem-solving approaches that had emerged from the LEaP programme. The project included the recruitment and training of eight parents of disabled children (as 'experts by experience') to critique drafts of the Toolkit and then to disseminate the research to their wider communities.

In 2017 a new edition of the Toolkit was published (re-titled the Cerebra 'Accessing Public Services Toolkit') and in the same year a Scottish Law

version of the Toolkit was also published. The Toolkits have been well received by families with disabled children and the Cerebra LEaP programme now runs a rolling programme of seminars / workshops demonstrating how the Toolkit can be used in practice. Details of the dissemination programme are provided as Appendix 3 at the end of this report.

In 2021 the Toolkit designed to support English and Welsh disabled children and their families was further updated.

Implementation and impact of earlier research

The LEaP programme has produced a significant number of research reports since its inception. These are listed in Appendix 2 at the end of this report. We are conscious that such reports are not ‘self-executing’ and that in order for them to effect real change in practice – ie change that materially improves the experiences of families with disabled children – there is a need for concerted action to ensure that the findings are implemented by the relevant public bodies. This means that it is essential that we continue to monitor the impact of all our research reports and not simply the most recent.

The section that follows lists material developments relating to earlier research reports that occurred in 2021.

The 2019-20 ‘Autism Plus’ research study

In 2020 the LEaP Project in conjunction with the Disability Law Service and the BBC published a research report that identified written policies of 41 English local authorities that discriminated against disabled children and young people with autism. The report being entitled ‘[Unlawful restrictions on the rights of disabled children with autism to social care needs assessments](#)’¹ (generally referred to as the ‘Autism Plus’ report). The policies of these authorities specified that children and young people with autism were not eligible for a disabled children’s assessment unless they also had another specified impairment and/or had a formal medical diagnosis.

During 2021, the Leeds LEaP Team have worked closely with the Disability Law Service (and their Patron the Rt. Hon. Sir Edward Davey) and a leading City of London law firm (acting *pro bono*) in corresponding with the 41 local authorities with a view to getting them to amend these policies. A report on the success of this initiative is in the process of being drafted and it is hoped that it will be published in early 2022. The Equality and Human Rights Commission has asked that it be notified of the responses we have received from the 41 authorities so that it can then decide what follow up action might be appropriate.

¹ P Bahri, L Clements, A L Aiello and T Hutchinson [Unlawful restrictions on the rights of disabled children with autism to social care needs assessments](#) (Cerebra 2020).

Disabled Children and the Cost Effectiveness of Home Adaptations & Disabled Facilities Grants (DFGs)

2017 research²– undertaken in collaboration with the ‘Access Committee for Leeds’ – concerned the cost effectiveness of DFGs to enable disabled children to access and occupy safely their homes. The research demonstrated that substantial cost savings resulted from the award of such grants. The report has been widely cited including in a House of Commons Library Briefing Paper³ and a Research Review report commissioned by the Department of Health and Social Care.⁴ The English Government has indicated that action concerning adaptations to address the needs of disabled people will be detailed in a forthcoming social care Green Paper. The LEaP project has established a good working relationship with Foundations⁵ and in 2021 Professor Luke Clements contributed a lecture for a [national webinar](#) it organised to promote its new publication ‘[A guide to adaptations for children and young people with behaviours that challenge](#)’: the publication quotes extensively from the 2017 research.

2021 publications and presentations

Publications

- L Clements and A L Aiello [Institutionalising Parent-carer Blame. The experiences of families with disabled children in their interactions with English local authority children’s services departments](#) [with] (Cerebra 2021).
- L Clements (with A Lawson, M Orchard, B Clough, and O Lewis) ‘[The Human Rights Act 1998 and Disabled People](#)’ in Human Rights in Action: Assessing the Positive Impact of the Human Rights Act 1998 in the UK, March 2021 pp 60 – 65.
- L Clements and A L Aiello [Urgent change is needed to stop the institutional culture of parent-carer blaming](#) (Special Needs Jungle 2021)
- L Clements and A L Aiello [Institutionalising Parent-carer Blame](#) Disabled Living magazine Issue 14 (2021)

Public engagement:

- 5 March 2021 ~ Professor Luke Clements spoke at a ‘Carers Summit’ convened by Carers Wales;
- 17 March ~ Professor Luke Clements and Dr Ana Laura Aiello outlined the emerging findings of their (then unpublished) research concerning Parent Care Blame policies and practices in English Children’s Services authorities in a webinar convened by the Parent and Carer Alliance.
- 20 April ~ Professor Luke Clements contributed [a lecture](#) concerning the cost benefits of adaptations for disabled children and their families, in a webinar convened by Foundations.

² L Clements and S McCormack [Disabled children and the cost effectiveness of home adaptations & disabled facilities grants](#) (Cerebra 2017).

³ House of Commons Library Briefing Paper ‘[Disabled facilities grants for home adaptations](#)’ (July 2018).

⁴ S Mackintosh and others [Disabled Facilities Grant \(DFG\) and Other Adaptations – External Review](#) (2018).

⁵ The National Body for Home Improvement Agencies in England – funded by the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government.

- 30 June ~ Professor Luke Clements and Dr Ana Laura Aiello outlined the research findings of their research concerning Parent Care Blame policies and practices in English Children's Services authorities in a webinar convened by the 'Parent and Carer Alliance' for 10 invited independent Parent Carer Groups as well as the Challenging Behaviour Foundation, Cerebra, and specialist social care lawyers.
- 12 August ~ Professor Luke Clements and Dr Ana Laura Aiello outlined the key findings of the research report 'Institutionalising Parent Care Blame' in a webinar convened by the Parent and Carer Alliance webinar and open to all interested individuals and organisations.
- 7 October ~ Professor Luke Clements and Dr Ana Laura Aiello outlined a possible 'implementation strategy' to bring about the changes identified as necessary in the research report 'Institutionalising Parent Care Blame' - in a webinar convened by the 'Parent and Carer Alliance' for 20 invited independent Parent Carer Groups, the Challenging Behaviour Foundation, Cerebra, and specialist social care lawyers.
- 13 October ~ Professor Luke Clements and Dr Ana Laura Aiello outlined the key findings of the research report 'Institutionalising Parent Care Blame' in a webinar convened by the West Suffolk NHS Clinical Commissioning Group at its Safeguarding Children and Child Death Reviews Conference.
- 4 November ~ Professor Luke Clements spoke at a Carers UK 'State of Caring' Conference.
- 9 November ~ Professor Luke Clements was interviewed by Carers World Radio concerning the research report 'Institutionalising Parent Care Blame'.
- 8 December ~ Professor Luke Clements and Dr Ana Laura Aiello outlined the key findings of the research report 'Institutionalising Parent Care Blame' as well as a possible 'implementation strategy' to bring about the changes identified as necessary in the report – in a webinar convened by Cerebra and open to all interested individuals and organisations

It has been another successful research year and for all of us involved in the Cerebra LEaP Project an enjoyable one. I end this report by making very special thanks to everyone at Cerebra for the wonderful support we have received.



Professor Luke Clements

16th January 2021

Appendix 1

Press and media coverage of the 2021 research report 'Institutionalising Parent Care Blame'

Cerebra website data:

- The Institutionalising Parent Blame report was downloaded 1,535 times and has continuously featured in the sites top 10 downloads every month since publication.
- The report page had 3,016 views; the news article on the report had 5,162 views.

In the five days following the publication of the report:

- Website traffic increased by 32.9%.
- Social media was the biggest source of traffic – up 286.8%.
- Visits to the Leeds Law research page were up by 655% and there was a 3,766.7% increase in downloads for the template letter 'we want something confirmed in writing'.
- On Facebook the top post of the week was a link to the article for the Parent Carer Blame report. It reached 9,600 people, had 605 post clicks and 185 reactions, comments or shares.
- The link to the BBC article reached 5,400 people, 693 post clicks and 270 reaction, comments or shares.
- The most popular tweet was the one about the report. It had 18,858 impressions and a 2.4% engagement rate.

National media:

- BBC Yorkshire TV Feature programme 21 July 2021 (a 7 minute feature);
- Main BBC on-line news channel
<https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-england-leeds-57915086>
- BBC Radio 4 Woman's Hour 2nd September 2021 (a 16 minute feature between 32.23 mins and 49.15 mins into the programme) at <https://www.bbc.co.uk/sounds/play/m000z6rv>.

Appendix 2

LEaP research publications as December 2020

Research reports / publications

- 2013 A [Digest of Opinions](#) concerning commonly occurring legal problems that disabled children and their families encounter;
- 2014 A further [Digest of Opinions](#) concerning commonly occurring legal problems that disabled children and their families encounter;
- 2015 A generic research report on the accessibility and accuracy of '[Short Breaks Statements](#)' involving over 40% of English social services authorities;
- 2016 A '[Problem-Solving Toolkit](#)' to support disabled children and their families who experience difficulties in relation to health, social care or other support services;
- 2017 [Disabled Children and the Cost Effectiveness of Home Adaptations & Disabled Facilities Grants](#);
- 2017 [Local Authority Home to School On-line Transport Policies: Accessibility and Accuracy](#);
- 2017 A new edition of the '[Problem-Solving Toolkit](#)' now renamed as the [Accessing Public Services Toolkit](#);
- 2017 [Accessing Public Services in Scotland: A problem-solving toolkit](#);
- 2018 [Disability related expenditure and pets care costs](#);
- 2018 [The accessibility of Disabled Facilities Grant application forms in England](#);
- 2019 [Unacceptable delay: Complaints procedures for disabled children and their families](#);
- 2019 [Direct Payments for Disabled Children and Young People and their Families](#);
- 2020 [Unlawful restrictions on the rights of disabled children with autism to social care needs assessments](#).
- 2021 [Institutionalising parent carer blame](#).

Appendix 3

Toolkit data – December 2021

Printed copies

Since the launch of the first Toolkit in February 2016 Cerebra has had 4,940 copies printed.

Website downloads

- English Toolkit: 40,896 downloads;
- Scottish Toolkit: 650 downloads.

Workshops

From June 2016 to December 2021, there have been a total of 98 workshops with a total of 1,040 attendees (an average of 11 per workshop). Of these 98 workshops, 11 have been repeat bookings.

Feedback includes:

- *I felt completely informed, empowered and fully confident to confront social services after attending the workshop and reading your excellent Toolkit, thank you so much! I wrote a letter of complaint to my Local Authority and I followed all of your advice to the letter. Within a short timeframe my complaint was successfully upheld, I received an apology and have also (as a result of my letter), been invited to work alongside them to reform their processes for future! I am so grateful to you as I could never have done this before the workshop or without the Toolkit.*
- *Thank you and for providing the really informative workshop this morning. I think I speak for all that attended these workshops are lifelines for many parents.*
- *By far the best workshop I been to, the relevance was amazing, delivered in a personable, realistic approach. Much appreciated by those of us that hugely identify with these difficulties!!*

Not included in these workshop figures are the presentations that Cerebra has delivered on the Toolkit at events which include:

- Kidz to Adultz Exhibitions:
 - Edinburgh on 14 September 2017;
 - Coventry on the 15 March 2018;
- Tuberosus-Sclerosis Society on 9 July 2017;
- Rubinstein Taybi family day on the 15 July 2017 in Birmingham;
- Advocacy Conference, Birmingham on 19 October 2017;
- TSA Scotland Conference on 31 August 2019.

Appendix 4

Student feedback responses – December 2021

The feedback provided by the students participating in the 2021-2022 Cerebra *pro bono* Research Programme has been (once again) extremely positive and rewarding. Our students have pointed to the following set of issues that they consider important:

Awareness about the relevant legal entitlements of disabled children and their families:

- *I have definitely gained a far more advanced insight into these areas of law and how the law relates to charitable organisations, as well as the amazing things that charities like Cerebra are getting done.*
- *I have definitely gained a wider knowledge of this area of law and didn't realise just how hard it is for people to access assistance if they need it.*
- *I gained valuable work experience and knowledge of specific disabilities whilst on this programme and built on my understanding of the hardship local authorities display on parents.*

Inspired by the experiences of parents of disabled children and other guest speakers (including NGOs and professionals with a rich experience in the legal profession as well as research impact work):

- *In my opinion, the speakers brought onto the programme on different sessions added a real advantage as the students were able to understand their point of view and why they thought current local authorities are slacking and how their employees are not properly trained, which can then have an adverse effect on parent-carers, and lead to parent-carer blame.*
- *I have thoroughly enjoyed listening to the guest speakers' own experiences when dealing with local authorities and understanding how the lack of support for families with disabled children is truly an underdeveloped area of concern.*
- *What I really enjoyed was the guest speakers, particularly the ones who were family members of children with disabilities, as it helped me to really understand the importance of the project.*

New research skills:

- *I've gained invaluable skills in researching and analysing the current state of social care for children with brain conditions as well as developing an understanding in Freedom of Information requests and how councils operate differently. Overall, it was a brilliant experience that I would recommend to any law student looking to see the law in practice for a greater good.*
- *I believe that the ability to see how collecting data can be used on such a large scale is also a skill and experience I have gained through the research.*
- *Ultimately, I think I gained a real insight into the complexities and difficulties within disability law as well as the unfairness that arises from it. This is due to the different research tasks I had to do for my assigned area; a skill I can develop further throughout my work within the legal sector.*

Thought the project was well organised to enable online participation (due to the pandemic):

- *I think generally the project works very well with a great balance of learning and independent research.*
- *I believe that this programme ran effortlessly, even though being faced with the problem of online meetings and the inability to have face to face discussions.*
- *The research has been well set out, easy to understand, and the staff involved have been incredibly helpful, always being there to respond if you need any help.*

Felt motivated to apply the knowledge and skills gained on the programme in their future career:

- *For me, the Cerebra research project has been an extremely important, enjoyable and engaging one which has provided me with skills I can sustain and use throughout my career.*
- *The project has inspired me to gain a deeper knowledge of disability law and the surrounding issues and difficulties that arise within it, which excites me greatly moving on with my studies and career.*
- *Overall, my participation in this project has helped me reaffirm my interest in carrying out research. It is meaningful and gives you a sense of “giving back” to the community.*