

## Open Justice Week Reflection: Public Legal Education at The Open University

#OpenJusticeWeek is a great opportunity to look back at the work OU Law students have done in delivering innovative public legal education projects across the UK over the past 12 months.

The OU aims to be open to people, places and ideas. These principles are the golden thread that link the wide variety of exciting student led pro bono projects that have been facilitated by the Open Justice Centre with the generous support of external partners including the Personal Support Unit, Citizens Advice and the St Giles Trust.

The projects all aim to provide a bridge between the study of law as an academic discipline and the practical legal issues faced by members of the public. The projects have provided students with the opportunity to apply their hard won legal knowledge to support members of the public in reaching a better understanding of legal principles that are of direct relevance to their circumstances.

So our students have been involved in working online and face to face to support schools, colleges, prisons and advice centres across Scotland, England, Wales and Northern Ireland. Many of these projects are the subject of posts on this blog and they give an insight into the impact OU law students have had in opening up an understanding of the legal ideas to people of all age in places across the UK.

Some of the many highlights in 2017/18 programme have been [Streetlaw](#) workshops in 15 schools and colleges dealing with topics on knife crime, social media and consent in sexual relationships. Teams of students have worked with prisoners in HMP Sudbury, HMP Oakwood and Wormwood Scrubs on legal issues ranging from updates to the law on joint enterprise, to family and employment law issues. Several [posts](#) on the Open Justice Blog give an insight into the impact this has had on our students and how positively the prison learners have responded. A team of OU students is currently preparing to work on a prison radio project in HMP Altcourse in June 2018. This will see them work with the prison radio production team to produce and broadcast a law themed programme on prison radio.

Many of the projects have involved OU students working alongside partner organisations including the St Giles Trust and Citizens Advice. We have been delighted to be able to place nearly 20 students with the Personal Support Unit in courts in London, Manchester, Exeter and Birmingham. This has given our students the opportunity to support [litigants in person](#) in navigating the civil court process which provides both an important public service and develops important professional skills for aspiring lawyers.

The OU's drive to provide educational opportunities to the widest possible range of learners meant that engaging with an online audience would be an obvious development for the Open Justice Centre. So we are delighted to be able to use #OpenJusticeWeek to showcase the work of our students and reach the widest possible audience in the process.

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