



**Student
Pro Bono
Awards
2021**



LexisNexis®



**The LawWorks and Attorney
General Student Pro Bono Awards**
Wednesday 12th May 2021



Welcome from the Attorney General

Welcome to the LawWorks and the Attorney General's Student Pro Bono Awards 2021. I commend the many law students providing pro bono advice to thousands of people every year. Advice is given in a variety of areas of law such as family, welfare benefits, personal injury, employment, housing and small claims, and volunteering takes various forms. The LawWorks Law School Pro Bono and Clinic Report shows that over the last academic year 3,000 students willingly give their time to provide pro bono advice, which has helped make a real difference to people's lives as well as their communities. In return, students gain legal skills and experience which will be of benefit to them throughout their professional career.

I sincerely hope the enthusiasm shown for pro bono by nominated students will stay with them for the rest of their careers. Pro bono not only brings a sense of responsibility but also a tremendous sense of achievement and pride. These awards celebrate the best in the pro bono field and I look forward to hearing about the passion and enthusiasm that students bring to their work today. The awards present a wonderful opportunity to appreciate a group of committed and hardworking law students who have gone to great lengths to help increase access to justice in their community. All students nominated across the four categories should be very proud. I hope that they will consider a career in the Government Legal Department where they can find a home for their skill, enthusiasm and commitment to public service.

This year's awards are of course a little different in that they are being held virtually; we have all had to get used to the positive role that video technology has played over the pandemic, and I'm pleased to see how many of this year's nominations have embraced the opportunities of remote working to extend pro bono work. I would like to extend my gratitude to this year's panel of Judges who have given their time and cast their expert eye over the shortlist and agreed the winners. I would also like to thank LexisNexis for kindly sponsoring this event, and to Alasdair Douglas for once again introducing the awards with the support of the LawWorks staff team. Most of all, I commend and thank all this year's entrants for their outstanding contributions to pro bono.



A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'M. Ellis'.

Rt. Hon Michael Ellis MP QC
Attorney General

Welcome from LawWorks Chair of Trustees

I am very pleased to welcome this year's shortlisted nominees to the 15th annual LawWorks and Attorney General Student Pro Bono Awards, which this year we are celebrating remotely. The Student Pro Bono Awards play a central role in LawWorks' involvement with students and offers a fantastic opportunity to celebrate the innovation, commitment and dedication of law students and law schools.



The latest LawWorks Law School Pro Bono and Clinics Report, based on an extensive survey of law schools and students, showed that over 3,000 students took part in pro bono programmes over the 2019-20 academic year. Of 78 law schools that responded to the survey, all but one offer pro bono opportunities and 90% said the range of their pro bono work had increased.

So it is clear that the pro bono work being done by law students across the country is playing a significant role in the delivery of free advice to those in need. At a time when many face barriers to accessing legal advice, it is reassuring to see that student pro bono is now embedded at so many UK universities. Today, we come together to recognise this commitment and hard work.

On behalf of LawWorks, I am hugely grateful to all the students nominated, to the teachers and lawyers working within the law schools and to local solicitors, barristers, legal executives and others who support them. For me, it is one of the most inspiring aspects of our work and gives us great hope for the future.

We received a large number of high-calibre nominations and the diversity of projects nominated across the five categories is particularly impressive. The Award categories are: 'Best contribution by a Law School'; 'Best contribution by a Team of Students'; 'Best contribution by an Individual Student'; and 'Best New Student Pro Bono Activity', with the winners chosen by an independent panel of judges. The Student Pro Bono Awards also include the Access to Justice Foundation Award for an educational body or student which has made a significant contribution to promoting access to justice.

Congratulations to all the shortlisted nominees; you should feel extremely proud of your achievements and the contribution you have made in enabling access to justice. I sincerely hope that you will continue with your commitment to pro bono as you move forward in your career, demonstrating that participating in pro bono is an essential part.

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'Alasdair Douglas'.

Alasdair Douglas
Chair of Trustees

The Awards

Categories:

- Best Contribution by a Law School
- Best Contribution by a Team of Students
- Best Contribution by an Individual
- Best New Pro Bono Activity
- Access to Justice Foundation Award

Best Contribution by a Law School

Aston Law Clinic, Aston University

“The Clinic students appreciate the importance of doing the right thing as an essential part of a lawyer’s value system. Their discovery of sustainable and embedded ways of doing the right thing means it gets done.”

In 2020, Aston University students were faced with uncertainty as their previously secured placement years were cancelled. In response to this, the Aston Law Clinic Placement Year was created. With laptops provided by the University, the students were able to provide tailored advice on start ups, SMEs, charities and social enterprises to clients, to raise awareness of issues around access to justice, and to facilitate public education activities.

Ten law students were recruited to work for three days per week in Aston Law Clinic for a period of 20 weeks. Additionally, in partnership with the Birmingham Pro Bono network, the students created online content to encourage engagement with pro bono, resulting in the network gaining more followers. During the Placement Year, the students also delivered free training sessions and produced advice videos on different legal topics. Due to excellent feedback from all and its positive impact on clients, students and other external stakeholders, the Placement Year will be run again.

Hertfordshire Law School

“The students are at the heart of this work and have been incredible...the enhancement to this project...will be hugely important in supporting some of our most vulnerable residents for years to come, giving them the vital support and advice they need at a time of great uncertainty.”

Hertfordshire Law School runs seven pro bono projects which work to tackle unmet legal need in the community and have helped almost 300 people since January 2020. These projects include the Hertfordshire Law Clinic (which provides free support and advice to the local community), a Streetlaw project, a Freedom Law Clinic, a Joint Enterprises Appeals Project, an Employment Litigant in Person Support Scheme, a Support at Court programme and the Stevenage Welfare Benefit Appeals project.

The Law School has adapted to the new challenges and demands created by the pandemic, by moving their clinic and other projects online, and adding new online services. This transition has seen students running successful live YouTube webinars, recording webinars on Covid-19 related issues, including employment law rights for young people, as well as delivering interactive zoom workshops to local schools.

University of Law

“An excellent service which allows people like me not to be bullied by large companies because of lack of money to get proper legal advice. I found the advice given on the day and the information in the subsequent PDF document to be thorough and well researched. Very happy and grateful for the help I received.”

In the past 16 months, the University of Law (ULaw) service has provided over 14,000 student pro bono opportunities and assisted in excess of 550 clients nationally. Their regular Amnesty International Virtual Workshops were accessed and enjoyed by over 6,000 students during the pandemic.

To address the impact of the pandemic, they introduced a Covid-19 Factsheet project, which focused on students preparing tailored legal information on current legal issues shaped by the pandemic. This project enabled 210 students across ULaw to work together to acknowledge and assist with some of the legal challenges created by the pandemic, whilst providing an opportunity for them to develop their legal research skills. They also expanded their public legal education program which now operates nationally across all campuses and, since October 2020, has provided over 725 student opportunities.

Nottingham Law School Legal Advice Centre, Nottingham Trent University

“The fight to get where we are now was incredibly difficult and hugely stressful. You [have] supported and held us up the whole way through each challenge. If [our daughter] could express her gratitude and sheer happiness, I know she would”.

Last academic year, 340 students worked with the Nottingham Law School’s Legal Advice Centre Ltd (‘the Centre’). As of March 2021, it achieved financial awards for its clients totalling over £5.2 million. For the year ending September 2020, students secured over £730,000 for their clients across seven different service areas. The Welfare Benefits service secured over £680,000 in benefits for clients despite a 33% reduction in cases experienced due to the impact of the pandemic. Students (and a paralegal) represented 34 individuals before the Social Security Tribunal and achieved a success rate of 82% (compared to a national average of around 66%), securing an average benefit entitlement of £20,000 per case.

The Centre is committed to improving equality and diversity, ensuring it provides work experience opportunities to those currently under-represented in the legal profession. In the last academic year, 34% of their student volunteers were from disadvantaged backgrounds, 27% declared a disability and 29% were from ethnic minorities.

University of Plymouth Law Clinic

"I just wanted to say a big thank you for all your help and support...I now started my work and [am] now trying to apply for university. I heartily appreciate everything you did for our family, it really changed my life and I am so happy now."

The University of Plymouth's Law Clinic provides pro bono legal advice and assistance to members of the public through its Employment Law, Family Law, Refugee Family Reunion/Immigration and Tenancy Advice Clinics. It has close reciprocal partnerships with a range of organisations in Plymouth and the wider region including the British Red Cross, Citizens Advice, Plymouth Domestic Abuse Service and the Plymouth and Devon Racial Equality Council.

In response to the pandemic, much of the Clinic's client-facing work has moved online with considerable thought given to confidentiality, security and provision for those for whom there are barriers to the use of technology, in order to ensure that services remain available to people in the greatest need. Over 65% of final year students are engaged in pro bono activity, and work across a range of pro bono projects, ensuring accessibility of advice, as well as creating online workshops and materials such as leaflets and podcasts.

Refugee Rights Hub, Helena Kennedy Centre for International Justice at Sheffield Hallam University

"The continued commitment and dedication of the students has meant that the Hub barely lost pace in its casework even under lockdown. The clients have been incredibly grateful [and] have frequently asked us to pass on best wishes to students."

The Helena Kennedy Centre Refugee Rights Hub supports refugees to make applications for Refugee Family Reunion so that they can bring close family members to the UK from elsewhere in the world. Students work alongside caseworkers to interview clients, collect evidence and build and submit the case to the Home Office. Since September 2020, the Hub has worked with 52 students, offering them comprehensive training before casework as well as the support of staff at the Hub to enable them to practice their skills.

Research shows that the impact of family separation on migrant success is profound and reuniting families enhances social inclusion, integration and cohesion. One case involved students interviewing a 13 year-old refugee via zoom (with the aid of an interpreter), who was sleeping rough in a European country, to prepare an online application with the aim of reuniting him with his older brother who is living in foster care in the UK.

UCL Centre for Access to Justice

“In 2020/21 UCL CAJ managed the largest number of volunteers on programmes to date, with nearly 500 applications received for a variety of roles...a 20% increase from 2019/20 despite the impact of the pandemic on student academic life.”

Through the UCL Centre for Access to Justice (CAJ), students are provided with opportunities to engage in a range of activities from shadowing lawyers on active casework to educating local school children about their rights. CAJ combines legal education with the provision of pro bono advice to vulnerable communities through UCL iLAC (the integrated Legal Advice Clinic), which offers members of the East London community free legal advice on all aspects of social welfare law. Despite the pandemic, student volunteers continued to work on cases remotely, with a 24% increase in enquiries from the previous year.

In addition, UCL iLAC also monitored Government emergency measures to ensure they were lawful and legitimate. UCL iLAC issued a pre-action letter to the Government in relation to its guidance to social services departments, suggesting they were not required to comply with all of their statutory duties under the Children Act 1989, the result of which was the guidance was amended.

Ulster University Law Clinic

“I felt out of my depth with what I was dealing with and you were all very approachable, knowledgeable, explained everything thoroughly to me, answered any questions and reassured me. I don't know what I would have done without Ulster Law Clinic.”

Through the Ulster University Law Clinic, students provide advice and representation for clients at social security and employment tribunals. Students represent clients at case management discussions all the way through to final hearings in employment cases, many of which involve disability discrimination but also sexual orientation and political opinion. In social security cases, students obtain medical evidence, prepare submissions, represent clients at tribunals and assist with legal appeals afterwards if required.

The clinic expanded its reach to the University's Magee campus in Derry/Londonderry in order to provide advice and support in family law cases, including domestic violence. It established a Domestic Abuse Referral Network with solicitor firms in Belfast and Derry/Londonderry who provide emergency advice to those fleeing from domestic abuse. The clinic takes on cases directly from members of the public and on referral from third sector organisations. Covid-19-related advice queries have contributed considerably to the huge volume of work undertaken by the students in the past 12 months.

Best Contribution by a Team of Students

Streetlaw Online Student Team, BPP University Law School Pro Bono Centre

“Feedback from the children afterwards was extremely positive and they displayed an excellent understanding of the legal processes involved. Several children even expressed a fascination and newfound interest in the legal profession.”

BPP’s public legal education (PLE) project, Streetlaw, is run by 345 student volunteers (the team) and plays a vital role in raising awareness of people’s legal rights and responsibilities. The pandemic meant that the team had to find a way to continue to deliver the service online whilst providing Covid-related content. By harnessing technology and using innovative methods such as chatboxes, polls, podcasts and videos, the team has ensured continued availability of PLE services and has been able to respond to the lockdowns. By delivering workshops online Streetlaw has significantly increased audience capacity, with an estimated 1,275 people attending in the last year and delivering 78 hours of live online content. In a survey of participants, 100% strongly agreed that the workshop had increased their knowledge about legal rights and responsibilities relevant to their life. The team’s commitment and innovation has paved the way for a more effective PLE service, available to clients in a variety of formats suited to their needs.

Cardiff Innocence Project Student Team Leaders, Cardiff University

“I could go on and on, but I just end up in tears again. I’ve literally prayed that one day, folks like yourselves would reach out and see that I am innocent, and I know I’ll never be able to repay the kindness of you all.”

An Innocent Project is a clinical programme in universities where law students work on cases of alleged miscarriages of justice. Cardiff University’s is the largest and most active in the UK and the only one to have overturned convictions at the Court of Appeal. Each case takes a long time to review and report on and the project relies heavily on pro bono lawyers and forensic scientists. The chances of a successful appeal are low, but the students support each other to avoid being disheartened. Pre-Covid the project would receive around 50 requests for assistance each year. This year, the project has recruited the largest ever student cohort (95) who have been trained to operate with a paperless system. 13 Team Leaders are currently leading teams of students on 13 cases. Students have created a methodology template for assessing cases of historical sexual abuse. Others have researched the rights of prisoners to request early release on compassionate grounds.

Talking Legal Student Society Committee, University of Law (Nottingham)

“The Committee’s dedication to this great initiative is infectious and has certainly encouraged further staff involvement and development of the project for the benefit of our students and the wider community in the creation of topical legal presentations, especially in light of the pandemic.”

The Talking Legal Student Society (set up by a Committee of four students at the University of Law in Nottingham) provides students with an opportunity to conduct legal research and prepare creative and innovative presentations, which are subsequently recorded online and shared with partner organisations. They have focused on key skills, such as communication and presentation, whilst also hosting virtual social events for the student community, to enable networking and to combat feelings of isolation in a pandemic-dominated world.

The project went from having a handful of students enrolled last year, to 45 per campus for each semester in 2020/21.

Resources have also been shared with students aged 16+ at an academy school and were well received. Student comments focussed on how informative the presentation was and how they had a much greater understanding of legal implications and the laws relating to the issues they faced.

The Family Law Clinic Team, University of Plymouth Law Clinic

“It is fantastic that your students are given an insight into the practical aspects of law and legal practice, not just the theoretical, and that they are able to hone their communication skills so that they can be understood by the more vulnerable members of society.”

Students work under supervision at the Family Law Clinic, one of four clinics at Plymouth Law Clinic. Students interview clients, provide follow-up letters of information and guidance on divorce law and child arrangement processes, and assist with the completion and filing of forms. Additionally, students create and present workshops on legal aid for family law, domestic abuse and substantive family law for the community. The group is also undertaking a new project to create a children’s rights hub.

This year the Clinic has provided information, guidance and follow-up information to 67 clients and has given a further 150 people one-off email information and signposting. The South West is a “legal desert” and law firms are stretched to capacity and therefore the ability to refer clients to the Clinic provides a much needed safety net. Clients and partner organisations frequently express their relief and thanks while students emphasise the increased sense of well-being they obtain.

Initial Advice Clinic, University of Strathclyde Law Clinic

“Once students have left the [clinic] and are beginning their legal careers, some of them will be inevitably practicing in the locality. They are aware of the work that IACs carries out and many return to volunteer their time. This has a cyclical effect and therefore inspires and encourages others to get involved in the project.”

The University of Strathclyde’s Initial Advice Clinics is a service entirely organised and run by students. It holds fortnightly drop-in sessions where members of the public can receive free legal advice from trainees and qualified solicitors. The aim of the service is to improve access to justice by giving initial advice to those who cannot afford a solicitor, cannot access legal aid and cannot obtain advice elsewhere. The clinic sessions have been fundamental in helping those with unmet legal needs, particularly during the pandemic. After suspending IAC services for only a few weeks due to Covid-19, it now operates remotely using zoom, owing to the students and volunteers who reacted swiftly to unprecedented circumstances. Because the service can now be accessed remotely, it is able to reach more people in need of legal advice in rural areas, including those living in the Highlands and Islands.

Best contribution by an Individual

Molly Brown, Nottingham Trent University

“She organised the other volunteers and was very good at making sure that the quality of the work was to a certain standard...She took the time to gain a grasp of the facts of each case, which allowed her to provide support to her team.”

Molly has worked tirelessly to promote access to justice throughout her time as a law student through the Nottingham Law School Legal Advice Centre (‘the Centre’) and is currently chair of the Student Pro Bono Committee. She has national and international acclaim, having spoken at a global conference in January 2021 and arranged a roundtable to discuss future pro bono activity by the University of Kenya. Molly has attended access to justice policy events on behalf of the Centre, contributed to a blog about her experience and has been interviewed by The Times. She is a vital support for the team and an ambassador for student mental health, having introduced a new wellbeing initiative. Molly has also been the student project lead for an outreach service providing vital support to some of the city’s most deprived communities and is a Free Representation Unit representative. Molly is an exceptional volunteer with an unwavering commitment to pro bono.

Sonia Gandhi, University of Leicester

“Sonia has been exceptional, especially with the pandemic. She has remained dedicated, motivated and committed to the well-being of every member of the society as well as making sure that we run as smoothly as possible. I’ve never met somebody so passionate about pro bono work and so able to support so many people effectively.”

As President of the Pro Bono Society, Sonia oversaw the operation of the University of Leicester Law School’s pro bono projects, managing a team of 17. Sonia has been instrumental in developing and recruiting for three new projects (a Windrush Compensation Project, a research project and a Climate Crisis project) meaning more students can take part in a wider variety of activities.

Sonia was also the director of the University of Leicester’s Lawyers Without Borders (LWOB) project. Under Sonia’s leadership, the project undertook legal research for its LWOB parent organisation; volunteered with the Race Equality Centre, on campaigns and social media development; held events about gender-based violence and other human rights violations, and raised funds for the LWOB parent organisation. Sonia has really excelled herself during the pandemic as it is through her efforts that the projects have been able to adapt their services and continue to support the community.

Natasha Godsiff, University of Cambridge

“Natasha has gone above and beyond to introduce new pro bono projects for Cambridge students and consistently inspired our members with both her passion and incredible work ethic. This has allowed students to make an impact despite the constraints of national lockdowns.”

Natasha has been the Pro Bono Officer at the Cambridge University Law Society (CULS) and has consistently inspired students with her passion and work ethic. Natasha’s leading project was with Amicus, a small charity that helps provide representation for those facing the death penalty in the United States. Natasha founded ‘The Missouri Project’ which provides students with the opportunity to work on a casework research project that aims to identify the disproportionate application of the death penalty in Missouri.

Natasha also organised a partnership to enable students to undertake pro bono work with Cambridge Citizens Advice, where she has been a long-term volunteer advisor. This includes hosting in-person student placements at the office, facilitating email advice opportunities, allowing students to participate in research, and writing for the Research & Campaigns team. She founded the CULS Pro Bono Awards to celebrate the legal pro bono work undertaken by Cambridge students and has introduced new fundraisers for the student society.

Amanda Ignatia, Dickson Poon School of Law, King's College London

"Amanda's commitment to pro bono and social justice is outstanding. The breadth and the quality of her work, the significant time she put in and her innovative Climate Justice work makes her an exceptional student."

With the arrival of the global pandemic, Amanda was the first student to volunteer to take on cases remotely, and has worked tirelessly on pro bono legal work since then to ensure advice across a wide spectrum of law was still accessible to those in need.

In environmental matters Amanda advised in a team of three on a complex case where repeated noise nuisance from an industrial site was adversely affecting the health of a woman with dementia. She was appointed as a student-volunteer director of the King's new Human Rights and Environment Legal Clinic, supporting other students and working, for example, on a case for a Welsh community group challenging a planning decision to build over a recreation area. She successfully pitched the chosen theme for the Law Clinics Global Day of Action: 'Rights of Nature,' for which she co-organised a series of events. She has demonstrated care, kindness and support to clients and students alike and has been professional and collaborative in all of her endeavours.

Annabel Pike, University of Essex

"I cannot think of anyone who deserves this more than Annabel, she is kind, dependable, hardworking and...a valuable asset to our firm."

Annabel has been a pivotal member of the Essex Law Clinic, not only for the entirety of her undergraduate degree but also as a post-graduate student. Being one of only five Gold Membership holders out of 235 students is a huge testament to her extraordinary contribution to the clinic.

She has a remarkable passion for the LGBTQ+ Rights Project, demonstrated through the development of a long list of initiatives for the project, including factsheets, a podcast and public legal education sessions. As a proactive student co-ordinator, Annabel has organised a training programme for the project's participants. She often takes on more than her scheduled cases when needed and was recognised as Student of the Month as a result of this dedication. On top of her ability to provide accurate and understandable legal advice, Annabel is also skilled in building rapport with peers and clients alike. In representing the clinic and the LGBTQ+ at various events, she has made the legal services offered accessible to those who might not otherwise feel safe or comfortable requesting them.

Best New Pro Bono Activity

Legal Advice Centre, University of Bolton

"I was delighted to have the level of care, consideration and expertise afforded to me and my situation. I was uncertain what to expect on my initial enquiry - however the process was coherently conveyed."

The University of Bolton Legal Advice Centre ("the centre") opened its doors on 27 September 2019, with a team of 13 LLB students, against a backdrop of reduced access to legal advice for the local community. Since then, the centre has provided legal advice to over 250 clients on a range of areas of law including employment, family, consumer, criminal, civil litigation, medical negligence, housing, and private client matters. This has given 108 students their first opportunity to work on real life legal cases under the supervision of a solicitor. As well as working to provide a seamless approach for clients, the centre has established partnerships with those who can assist clients to progress beyond the advisory stage. The centre has also been instrumental in drawing together advice services in Bolton and over the past year has worked with clients from Barnardo's, the Red Cross, Bolton Council and housing associations.

Dads House Legal Clinic

"The students have come on in leaps and bounds, they've been hungry to learn, and they are perfectly adept at giving advice, helping clients fill in long complicated court forms and guiding them through the process. The emotional stability that they help to provide to our clients cannot be overstated."

Dads House offers a holistic service to families, including a food bank and general support. The Legal Clinic was started in May 2020 and offers free family law advice to parents who cannot afford alternative options. Three law students (Katie Henderson, Linette Graham and Laura Brogden) attend weekly sessions, working alongside their supervisor taking notes, drafting applications for Child Arrangements Orders, advising on parenting arrangements and assisting in cases involving abduction and domestic abuse. The contact with clients is ongoing which allows the students to build up a trust and rapport with them. The students have become experts at handling very sensitive matters and are accustomed to offering empathetic and practical advice, equipping clients with hope and the tools they need to keep going. 130 meetings have been conducted since the start with over 60 of them as returning clients.

King's IP Clinic, King's Legal Clinic, King's College London

"The advice I received was easy to understand...helped demystify the trademarking process and gave me a clear understanding of my next steps. The advice has saved me money and equipped me with the tools I need to trademark my business name."

The new Intellectual Property (IP) Clinic at King's Legal Clinic opened its (virtual) doors in the middle of the first Covid-19 lockdown. Thanks to the extraordinary efforts of students and partner firms (Briffa and Bird & Bird) the IP Clinic's advice has protected new businesses, supported female and young entrepreneurship and fostered creativity and innovation. Students produced research and advice on cutting-edge IP issues, such as who owns rights in collaborative photography, and what IP rights are involved in setting up a start-up or an app for a virtual art gallery. One client was a north London mother who, inspired by her Thai roots, wanted to start up a small business selling spicy sauce during lockdown and needed IP advice. With help from the IP Clinic, she was able to create The Woolf's Kitchen and went on to become an Enterprise Nation Female Start-up finalist in 2020.

The Protea Clinic, King's Legal Clinic, King's College London

"We are truly grateful for the commitment displayed by students from the King's Legal Clinic...I have witnessed first class research...on topics as varied as the availability of a HIV drug in Uganda to the risk of persecution of a political organisation in China."

The Protea Clinic is a collaborative project set up by King's Legal Clinic, Hammersmith and Fulham Law Centre and Hibiscus Initiatives to address the need for high quality legal advice for vulnerable migrant females, including foreign national prisoners; and to help identify and assist victims of modern slavery. The clinic seeks to address the gap created by legal aid cuts, which has led to the halving of specialist immigration advice providers.

Students play a role in carrying out fact-finding interviews with clients and, guided by solicitors, drafting comprehensive advice letters. Service users come from very complex backgrounds and often experience mental health difficulties, language and cultural barriers, poverty, gender-based abuse, loneliness, homelessness and involvement with the criminal justice system. These multiple disadvantages often mean that their immigration cases are complex and not easily resolved, making the students' work more challenging but also more invaluable. During the Covid-19 pandemic, the clinic has successfully operated remotely.

The Justice Hub Virtual Vacation Scheme, The University of Manchester

“Instead of giving advice to individual clients in person, the objective for the Virtual Vacation Scheme was to provide online and accessible advice that could help a number of people at the click of a button.”

The Justice Hub traditionally provided a summer vacation scheme where students worked for one week on a case in the University’s Legal Advice Centre. As Covid-19 struck, it became clear that it would not be possible to operate the vacation scheme this way. It simultaneously became clear that the effects of the pandemic would lead to a higher need for free legal advice. Accordingly, the Justice Hub devised a Virtual Vacation Scheme for students globally to provide accessible online information. It was clear that the scheme would be of most benefit to students who had little or no experience on their CVs, and participants were recruited on this basis. In June 2020 the students worked virtually and tirelessly in their homes across the world, identifying appropriate areas of law for carers, employees, families, consumers and tenants - presenting legal advice to a virtual audience by creating online videos and accessible guidance for the public, which have been viewed hundreds of times.

Midlands Employment Rights Advice Line, University of Law

“Essentially an awesome and ingenious way of creating value to both the local community and the university.”

Launched formally in September 2020 as a response to an enormous surge in employment-related enquiries across the Midlands region and an increased appetite from the students of the Birmingham and Nottingham campuses to give back to their community, the Midlands Employment Rights Advice Line (MERAL) is a free weekly advice line covering a wide range of employment matters.

To date, across 27 clinics, over 200 law students and around 20 advisers from eight law firms have been involved in helping 98 clients. As the clinics grow from strength to strength, MERAL is looking to expand to other campuses and involve more volunteers. The initiative is now starting to develop its reputation further afield, with referrals from local Employment Tribunals and by word of mouth. Clients who responded to the feedback survey reported that they would use the service again and refer others to it. All respondents confirmed that, after taking advice, they directly took steps to resolve their matter. For students, MERAL has afforded the opportunity to explore employment law as a discipline and the chance to work with a range of specialist lawyers.

University of London Refugee Law Clinic

“This clinic is life changing, not just for the clients but for the students involved.”

The Refugee Law Clinic is an intercollegiate project of the University of London with partnerships from two commercial law firms. The legal focus is on advising and preparing fresh claims for asylum, an area identified as underserved in the current legal landscape, and aims to complement the work of law firms and other service providers in London. A positive fresh claim means that someone who was previously a denied asylum seeker can gain refugee protection in the UK.

Opening in August 2020, the clinic has had 30 referrals and started work on 20 cases, including those with disputed nationality, likely trafficking and where there had previously been poor legal advice. The clinic has provided advice to referral agencies on fresh claims and on other referral pathways for particular cases, working towards the aim of becoming a centre of excellence in the field of fresh claims. Students are involved in a number of projects developing ‘good practice’ guides for lawyers working on fresh claims and information sheets for clients who may be starting the process of submitting a fresh claim.

Staffordshire University Legal Advice Centre, Staffordshire University

“I found this service invaluable for women who have experienced abuse. It was empowering and a positive step towards my future.”

The increase in cases of domestic violence, heightened by the coronavirus pandemic, has seen the need for services intensify. Staffordshire University Legal Advice Clinic teamed up with Lewis Rodgers solicitors to provide a monthly remote clinic at Staffordshire Women’s Aid. Student volunteers worked closely with solicitors from Lewis Rodgers to identify and deal with the many issues surrounding domestic violence and related divorce and child arrangement issues.

The clinic was held at Staffordshire Women’s Aid to enable women using the service to have secure access to a device and the internet, and to have the support of trained Women’s Aid volunteers. This innovative approach mitigates some of the barriers faced by women needing advice such as lack of computer equipment, or the support to access advice services. The clinic is fully booked each month, giving women access to high quality legal advice and information, increasing their knowledge of their rights and available options. Dedicated student volunteers hope to continue supporting the clinic beyond the academic year.

THE ACCESS TO JUSTICE FOUNDATION



Access to Justice Foundation Award

The Access to Justice Foundation works to bring additional financial resources to support free legal help for those in need. We are delighted to be part of the LawWorks and Attorney General Student Pro Bono Awards.

The work of the Foundation is strategic and focuses on generating new sources of funding to support the free legal advice sector.

The Foundation receives funds from pro bono costs, introduced in October 2008 by section 194 of the Legal Services Act 2007, donations of dormant client account funds and works with a matrix of Legal Support Trusts to support the pro bono and advice sector, with fundraising events such as 'Go the Extra Mile Justice' and the regional Legal Walks.

The Access to Justice Foundation Award aims to recognise the work of individuals and educational bodies in promoting and supporting access to justice. Reflecting the work the Foundation itself does, we received nominations from law schools across the country which promote, support and fundraise for the work of the pro bono sector.

This year's award was judged by ATJF Trustee, Rebecca Samaras.

Rebecca Samaras is the Director of Pro Bono and Clinical Legal Education at the University of Edinburgh. Rebecca is responsible for the strategic development and leadership of the Edinburgh Law School's pro bono activity.

A former litigation solicitor, Rebecca specialised in family law and the additional support needs (SEN) of underrepresented vulnerable individuals, and charities throughout her career. She sits on the Law Society of Scotland's Access to Justice Committee and the Scotland Committee for the Access to Justice Foundation. She is also Chair of the Scottish University Law Clinic Network (SULCN) and a Trustee of the Clinical Legal Education Organisation (CLEO).

'It is wonderful to see so many students dedicate their time to ensuring that others have access to justice in their hour of need. Each nomination had a strong application and was difficult to choose this worthy shortlist. I congratulate them all on their successful projects!'

Bangor University Law School

“It was great to see students and staff take part in Go the Extra Mile for Justice and raise funds for local free legal advice services. The support was hugely supported by Lord David Lloyd-Jones (Justice of the UK Supreme Court) – reminding us why our challengers are making a huge difference.”

Bangor University Law School (“the School”) has worked to raise awareness of access to justice issues in the areas of administrative justice and public law in particular. This included highlighting issues of housing, homelessness and education by working with the advice sector to develop online tools to assist advice provision. The research work carried out by students on advice needs in Wales has been cited in the Senedd and a recent Commission on Justice in Wales. Much of this work was achieved through the School’s CYMUNED (Community) programme which enabled students and staff to access to a range of opportunities including providing bilingual public legal education sessions through across North Wales. The School provides a number of internship opportunities for students to help scope the unmet needs for legal advice by examining the use of public law procedures Wales. This has helped the School to recognise how they can improve access to specialist legal advice services. Staff and students have also raised funds for the Access to Justice Foundation’s virtual ‘Go the Extra Mile’ challenge, raising over £1,000 for Reaching Justice Wales.

Pro Bono Centre, BPP University

“I really can’t thank you enough for these translations as it will really help the family to start accessing the support they need.”

BPP University’s Pro Bono Centre have organised several online events such as webinars and panel events to highlight access to justice issues. Since February 2020, the student volunteers within the BPP’s Human Rights Unit have hosted five panel events, published 60 blog posts, published a Human Rights Journal and launched a podcast to promote awareness of access to justice issues. In December 2020, the BPP team delivered a ‘Jobs at Risk’ webinar in collaboration with the Employment Legal Advice Network for the Mayor of London and Greater London Authority. This was done in order to promote understanding of employment law and redundancy rights during the pandemic. Part of BPP’s Pro Bono Centre work includes their Legal Translation Service which has provided free translation services for law centres, translating letters and complex legal advice briefs for communities across the UK. BPP has participated and helped to raise funds for the London Legal Support Trust’s 10k Steps for Justice and the Great Legal Quiz.

Cambridge University Law Society, Pro Bono Department

“We have been so impressed with the students’ dedication to raising funds for the Eastern Legal Support Trust; especially when balancing the demands of a degree and the additional burdens of the pandemic.”

The Cambridge University Law Society (CULS) has founded a number of projects promoting access to justice. During Covid-19, in partnership with Citizens Advice Cambridge, students have focused on remote volunteering to raise awareness of Citizens Advice campaigns. CULS has hosted a movie fundraiser of ‘Clemency’ to raise funds in support of Amicus, a charity that helps provide representation for those facing the death penalty in the United States. CULS has also founded the ‘Missouri Project,’ which has enabled students to work on a casework research project which identifies the disproportionate application of the death penalty in Missouri. With the International Law Book Facility, CULS has sent legal textbooks to several universities and prisons in Ethiopia. CULS has also participated in the Access to Justice Foundation’s ‘Go the Extra Mile’ challenge with prizes for the students who raised the most money including (first prize) afternoon tea at the Supreme Court with Lady Arden and (second prize) dinner with Cambridge academic Dr Stelios Tofaris. CULS has also founded its own ‘CULS Pro Bono Awards’ to celebrate legal pro bono works performed by Cambridge students.

Pro Bono Team, University of Law

“Our clients are often vulnerable and feel they have nowhere to turn for support... being able to refer to this program is highly appreciated...Citizens Advice is impressed by the high level of support provided by the students and their supervisors from the university and are delighted that the project is ongoing.”

University of Law has worked in partnership with many law firms and charities across the country to supplement and develop its pro bono services. Students at the faculty have collaborated with organisations such as Advocate, National Centre for Domestic Violence, Vocalise, IPSEA, ELIPS and FLOWS, to help students to develop an understanding of access to justice issues. University of Law has provided regular Amnesty International Virtual Workshops and introduced several pro bono activities in response to the pandemic such as an expansion their public legal education programme. During the pandemic, the University of Law has also launched its own advice line – the Midlands Employment Rights Advice Line (MERAL). This service provides much needed advice on employment law. A Junior Lawyers Against Poverty Group has also been established to increase student knowledge on human rights issues.

University of Plymouth Law Clinic

“These students have lived making ‘lemonade out of lemons’ and produced materials and learning that will positively impact our project for years to come.”

Plymouth Law Clinic (“the Clinic”) has participated in a range of events across the South West in the past 12 months. For the second consecutive year, the Clinic co-hosted the Access to Justice Conference South West in partnership with the Public Law Project and Plymouth Citizens Advice. Following a request from Cornwall Citizen Advice, the Clinic’s Street Law Project hosted workshops on legal support for family law and domestic abuse. This collaboration provided vital services around access to justice, while developing referral networks for those who may be entitled to legal aid or are suffering domestic abuse. Students have also provided family law sessions in partnership with Plymouth Domestic Abuse Service, the British Red Cross and Plymouth and Devon Racial Equality Council. The University’s Street Law programme is developing a Children’s Rights hub in response to the pandemic, promoting organisations that support children’s rights. The Clinic is also assisting Cornwall Council, the Cornwall Refugee Forum and the Plymouth Asylum Seeker Refugee network to assist resettled families access their legal rights as well as campaigning on the lack of immigration advice services in the region.

School of Law, University of Leeds

“We completed 11,447 miles altogether across the 8 week challenge we set, with 79 students and staff from our school involved. Go the Extra Mile for Justice... has been a wonderful challenge for us to take part in. It has really brought the school closer together as a community.”

The School of Law at the University of Leeds (“the School”) has run a number of community engagements to advocate for access to justice. In its community engagement project, it partnered with organisations such as Chapeltown Citizens Advice, Support Through Court and Leeds City Council. With these organisations the School could support advice services in the community that assist residents in accessing free legal support. The School has also participated in the Access to Justice Foundation’s ‘Go the Extra Mile’ challenge. The challenge gave the School the opportunity to raise awareness of the work of the Access to Justice Foundation and the wider free legal advice sector. A small committee of students led by staff was set up in the School of Law to plan how to undertake this event across the school community. Over the course of eight weeks, 14 teams made up of 79 members of staff and students across Leeds University completed 11,447 miles and managed to raise over £500.

Ulster University Law Clinic

"I can't say thank you enough, this really takes a lot of pressure off us. Our Foodbank hasn't stopped and at present we are doing approximately 240 food parcels per week including baby items and toiletries. This makes a huge difference to us."

Ulster University Law Clinic ("the Clinic") has provided many services to help their community in Belfast. Staff at the Clinic provide free employment law training and students delivered free social security training to community groups to help deal with the volume of covid-related enquiries. The Ulster University Clinic has established a Domestic Abuse Referral Network in partnership with law firms in Belfast and Derry-Londonderry, providing emergency advice to survivors of domestic abuse. Staff have managed to secure private funding for the Whistle Project, an online counselling service for children facing domestic abuse during the pandemic. The team at Ulster University also secured funding to support the North Belfast Food Bank which provided food packages for struggling families at Christmas last year. In collaboration with students from the School of Hospitality Management, students and staff at the Clinic created videos, menu cards and breakfast parcels for 28 resettled families from ethnic minority backgrounds.

Thank you to our Judges

LawWorks & Attorney General Student Pro Bono Awards:

- Simon Davis, former President the Law Society of England and Wales
- Peter Farr, Head of Civil Law Policy, Ministry of Justice
- James Harper, Executive Sponsor, Rule of Law and CSR for LexisNexis UK & Ireland
- Joshua Richman, Senior Editor, LawCareers.Net
- Leanne Targett-Parker, Chair, Bar Council Pro Bono Committee
- Rohini Teather, Head of Parliamentary Affairs, Legal Aid Practitioners Group

Access to Justice Foundation Award

- Rebecca Samaras, Director of Pro Bono and Clinical Legal Education, University of Edinburgh

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About LawWorks

Supporting and celebrating pro bono

LawWorks (the Solicitors Pro Bono Group) aims to promote, support and facilitate pro bono legal services that extend access to the law for individuals and communities in need and the organisations that support them.

We champion pro bono because of the positive contribution and difference it makes for individuals, communities and society.

We work (in England and Wales) with the solicitors' profession and our members, the Law Society, law schools and law students, law centres, advice agencies and others to develop and support pro bono legal services, and to promote access to justice for all.

While pro bono is not, and should not be, an alternative to legal aid - it makes an important contribution to accessing legal information, advice and representation.

We enable the provision of pro bono through:

Supporting a growing network of over 300 independent pro bono clinics. We work with lawyers, advice agencies, charities and others to establish or develop new clinics, and provide on-going support, information, training and webinars and legal resources (including the online legal research tools Lexis®Library and Lexis®PSL);

- Our Not-for-Profits Programme facilitates the provision of free legal advice for smaller charities and not-for-profit organisations, supported by volunteer solicitors from among LawWorks members. We also provide free online training videos for charities, covering many of the common legal issues they face;
- We support more in-depth pro bono ('secondary specialisation'), in areas of social welfare law. This includes supporting solicitors to provide representation at First-tier social security tribunals, an unpaid wages project and, working with the charity Together for Short Lives, to provide legal advice and case-work for the parents and carers of children with life-limiting conditions;
- Connecting barristers and solicitors to jointly litigate civil cases on a pro bono basis through the Pro Bono Connect Scheme;
- Our Free Legal Answers online platform enables individuals to ask and volunteers to answer discrete legal questions.

Supporting litigants in person

LawWorks is a partner organisation for the Litigant in Person Support Strategy, working with Law for Life, Support Through Court, RCJ Advice, Advocate and the Access to Justice Foundation. Funded by the Ministry of Justice, the Strategy works to improve the experience of people involved in legal proceedings who do not have a lawyer.

Addressing barriers to justice: a ‘policy voice’ for pro bono

We work to remove barriers to pro bono and use evidence from the work of local clinics, our members and others to advocate for positive policy change to better enable access to free legal advice and to justice.

In building a ‘policy voice’ for LawWorks and pro bono, we have engaged with the Government’s review of LASPO (the Legal Aid, Sentencing and Punishment of Offenders Act 2012) and subsequent Legal Support Action Plan, as well as other strategic policy reviews and consultations such as the Taylor review of modern working practices, and on court and tribunal modernisation.

We have supported various fora for policy engagement including the All Party Parliamentary Group (APPG) on Pro Bono and Public Legal Education, which has developed a public legal education vision and strategy with the support of the Law Officers. During COVID, we have facilitated a new advice sector roundtable with a range of legal and access to justice organisations to address issues, challenges and legal needs raised by the crisis.

Student pro bono

The pro bono contribution of law schools and students is significant and growing. LawWorks encourages and supports student pro bono (many law school clinics are part of the LawWorks clinics network), and the important contribution students make is recognised and celebrated through the annual LawWorks & Attorney General Student Pro Bono Awards. The growth in the range and scale of pro bono activities undertaken by students is analysed in more depth our [Law School Pro Bono and Clinic report](#).

Membership of LawWorks

The support of our members is vital to our work. Membership of LawWorks makes an important contribution towards the achievement of our charitable objectives and supporting our work in enabling and celebrating pro bono and the importance of access to justice. We have around 130 members, including some of the largest City and International firms, national, regional and local firms, and in-house teams, law schools and charities.

We support our members in a number of ways, including by providing information, guidance and advice (for example, in setting up or developing a pro bono project), and facilitating pro bono activity and connections through our Not-For-Profits Programme.

Members have the opportunity to nominate for our annual awards and have access to our training, online resources, newsletters and networking opportunities (including a quarterly pro bono forum and regional events), and have the opportunity to contribute to our growing policy work.

By joining LawWorks you will be supporting our charitable work to encourage, support and celebrate pro bono, and also our work to highlight - and address - barriers to accessing justice.

The fee depends upon the size of the firm or in-house legal team - with other categories also for charities and other organisations.

For more information about membership of LawWorks and the difference your membership can make, please get in touch with Avnita Bhandal, Administration (Casework) & Membership Officer, avnita.bhandal@lawworks.org.uk or visit our website www.lawworks.org.uk.

Other ways to support LawWorks

The need for our work has increased as legal aid has been cut and some law centres closed. Covid-19 has exacerbated the problems faced by disadvantaged individuals and the economic downturn will affect many lives for years to come. As a charity we are almost entirely dependent on grants and other philanthropic funding and this determines the scope and reach of our work.

We welcome both one-off donations and long-term support for our programmes. There are also opportunities to take part in fundraising challenges or to sponsor events. If you would like to discuss supporting LawWorks financially, please contact Kate Buchanan, kate.buchanan@lawworks.org.uk, or visit our website www.lawworks.org.uk.

The LawWorks & Attorney General Student Pro Bono Awards
are kindly sponsored by:



LawWorks is a charity working in England and Wales to connect volunteer lawyers with people in need of legal advice, who are not eligible for legal aid and cannot afford to pay and with the not-for-profit organisations that support them.

www.lawworks.org.uk

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