

LawWorks Strategy



Our purpose

LawWorks (the Solicitors Pro Bono Group) promotes, supports and facilitates 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.

Context

The legal professions have a proud tradition of providing pro bono legal advice and representation. While pro bono is not a substitute for legal aid, or a replacement for funding law centres and advice agencies, its contribution is necessary, significant and growing.

Pro bono does not exist in a vacuum. The solicitors' profession is evolving and adapting and many factors influence legal need and the ability to access legal services. Many City and International firms have established pro bono practices and a strong pro bono culture, but there is an opportunity to recognise, encourage and support pro bono across the profession, particularly among smaller firms, sole practitioners and in-house lawyers. Legal 'hubs' such as London, Manchester and Bristol) have strong and growing pro bono cultures, and the challenge and opportunity is to spread this engagement to all parts of England and Wales.

Pro bono needs appropriate investment and infrastructure to flourish and be effective and sustainable. It works best when it works in partnership - within the profession, through collaborative projects, networking and mentoring, as well as with advice agencies, law centres and others.

Our strategy has been informed by consultation with our members, stakeholders, clinic co-ordinators and other partners.

Our Principles

- *Access to justice*: Pro bono embodies a commitment to access to justice and acting in the public interest. We champion public funding for legal aid, and for law centres and advice agencies.
- *Partnership working*: Collaboration, sharing and openness to facilitate, enhance and sustain pro bono.
- *Professionalism*: Pro bono clients should receive the same standard and quality of work as other legal clients.
- *Fairness and equality*: Support should be directed to those facing the greatest barriers to accessing justice (e.g., because of poverty, social exclusion, discrimination or stigma).
- *Making a difference*: A strong evidence base for pro bono will maximise its impact and our effectiveness as an organisation.

Our work

- We **promote** and **support** pro bono within the solicitors' profession and in law schools.
- We help **connect** those needing pro bono legal services with the pro bono volunteers and assistance they need.
- We **advocate** for policy change and the goal of access to justice for all.

Strategic objectives

1. Promoting, facilitating and developing pro bono across the solicitors' profession and at law schools in England and Wales.

- a) Increasing the level of engagement and the number of solicitors participating in pro bono work;
- b) Working with in-house teams to ensure they are able to fully participate in the LawWorks programmes and are supported in their pro bono work, independently and in collaboration with firms;
- c) Developing the evidence base for pro bono impact and effectiveness, and encouraging and sharing learning and best practice;

- d) Providing training, practical assistance and resources to facilitate and develop pro bono practice (complimenting professional bodies' tools such as the Law Society's Pro Bono Manual);
- e) Sharing news and information about pro bono legal services and practice to encourage, inspire and inform;
- f) Providing professional indemnity insurance through LawWorks projects and LawWorks volunteering and exploring ways to facilitate wider insurance for pro bono work;
- g) Recognising and celebrating pro bono commitment, innovation and impact (through case-studies, supporting National Pro Bono Week and the Pro Bono Charter, and our annual awards).

2. Facilitating and supporting pro bono legal services and access to justice for people in need and without the means to pay.

- a) Supporting local independent pro bono clinics through their participation in the LawWorks Clinics network;
- b) Working in partnership with solicitors, the advice sector and legal education institutions to support the development of existing and new clinics that support people in need – including clinics offering specialised advice or casework/representation, particularly in areas of high unmet need;
- c) Supporting and developing 'in-depth' pro bono (secondary specialisation) and facilitating and sharing experience and learning;
- d) Being a full and active partner in the Litigants in Person Support Strategy and Network.

3. Connecting smaller charities and not-for-profit organisations - supporting communities and people in need - with pro bono legal services and enabling them to deliver their mission.

- a) Increasing the number of charities and not-for-profit organisations (in England and Wales) supported by pro bono legal advice, to improve their effectiveness and resilience;
- b) Capturing the impact and difference that pro bono makes for smaller charities and their beneficiaries;

- c) Providing online and other legal information resources, including appropriate referral and sign-posting;
- d) Identifying new or emerging legal issues for charities and not-for-profits, which may inform the policy and practice work of the National Council for Voluntary Organisations (NCVO), the Association of Chief Executives of Voluntary Organisations (ACEVO) and others.

4. Addressing barriers to pro bono and adding our voice for policy change and pursuing access to justice for all.

- a) Developing a 'policy voice' for pro bono drawing on the experience, knowledge and expertise of our members and pro bono volunteers, services and partners;
- b) Making the case for legal aid and for adequate funding for advice agencies and law centres;
- c) Collaborating on policy development, submissions and advocacy, and facilitating opportunities for information exchange, debate and networking (including providing the secretariat for the All Party Parliamentary Group on Pro Bono and Public Legal Education);
- d) Facilitating opportunities for pro bono legal research to influence policy change and law reform and providing thought leadership on how pro bono can develop to address barriers to accessing justice;
- e) Shaping a regulatory landscape to encourage solicitors and other legal professionals to engage in pro bono work.

5. Enhancing our impact through organisational efficiencies, leadership and developing our people

- a) Creating a dynamic organisation where staff and board members are aligned with our purpose and principles, and are active ambassadors for LawWorks;
- b) Working collaboratively throughout the organisation and the pro bono sector;
- c) Striving for high-quality leadership at all levels within the organisation;
- d) Integrating and improving our systems to ensure that we are accountable and efficient;
- e) Maintaining a well-motivated and highly skilled workforce by encouraging their learning and development.

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