



# LawWorks Activities and Impact Report:

Coping with Covid 2020-2021

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# Foreword

Thank you for reading our Activities and Impact Report which covers a challenging period as the Covid pandemic impacted not only on legal advice need, but also the operating environment for pro bono. Based on data collected over 2020, the report evidences the benefit of all of our programmes in one place and gives a full picture of our activities and impact.

Over the past two years, LawWorks have developed new programmes, harnessing the power of tech solutions to connect those who need pro bono advice with those who can provide it, facilitating greater collaboration, and working with other pro bono and advice organisations to help maximise collective impact. Whilst LawWorks are a relatively small team, we do not work alone – our members, partner organisations and other stakeholders all deserve recognition and contribute to delivering a significant benefit for individuals, charities and communities.

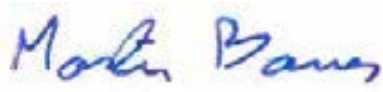
As just one example of this collaborative approach, the number of independent clinics on the LawWorks clinics network has reached over 300, through local partnerships developed with law schools, law firms, advice agencies, and other charities or community groups. With LawWorks' support, clinics were able to respond to nearly 50,000 enquiries over the 2020 reporting period, despite the pressures of the pandemic. LawWorks is also a partner in the Litigant in Person Support Strategy (LIPSS), with Law for Life, RCJ Advice, Support through Court, Advocate, and the Access to Justice Foundation.

Pro bono is not a substitute for legal aid, but its contribution is necessary, significant and growing. It is crucial that we work to understand the role and impact of pro bono, to ensure that it has the greatest possible impact, is targeted in its approach, and is able to reach those in need at the earliest opportunity.

Evaluation of impact is never an exact science, there are inevitably questions of attribution (i.e., “did the legal advice/intervention make a difference?”) and no single methodology can fully capture the impact of an organisation’s work. In this report we have drawn from multiple data collection methods in order to determine the impact of our programmes, support, training and policy work, and our new digital projects. The pandemic, however, presented challenges for data collection, and we recognise the need to do more to understand client journeys and outcomes. Often reporting from free legal advice services is about outputs, whilst what matters most are the outcomes for the beneficiaries. Engagement with service users will be an important strand of our work going forward, and we are using this report to consult with our stakeholders over our “theory of change”.

We also recognise that numbers alone though do not tell us the whole story. Behind every enquiry there is a human problem, and each client is different with individual stories, experiences and issues. A legal problem does not have to be complex to be potentially life-changing or to be daunting, and often legal problems point to a bigger policy issue. Not every legal problem can be resolved, but the work our bono programmes provide can improve lives for the better.

This has been a period that few of us will forget, and I would like to thank all pro bono volunteers, our partners, funders (including the Ministry of Justice, the Law Society, Access to Justice Foundation and the National Lotteries Community Fund) and LawWorks staff and trustees for their passion and commitment.



**Martin Barnes**

Chief Executive, LawWorks

# Meeting need and measuring impact

## About us

LawWorks (the Solicitors Pro Bono Group) is a charity that 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.<sup>1</sup>

LawWorks operates as a membership organisation, supporting volunteers from around 150 law firms and in-house legal teams across England and Wales.<sup>2</sup> The pro bono work of each organisation makes a difference to their local community; collectively our members play an invaluable role in extending access to justice to those in need of advice. Partnership is at the heart of what we do, and our range of programmes and support are delivered in collaboration with legal professionals, law schools, the Law Society and other professional bodies.

## Evaluation: Legal needs, our data and theory of change

There is a significant evidence base on unmet legal needs. Research from the Legal Services Board (LSB) demonstrates that 3.6 million adults in England and Wales have an unmet legal need involving a dispute every year, and more than 1 in 3 adults (36%) have low confidence that they could achieve a fair and positive outcome when faced with a legal problem.<sup>3</sup> Pro bono can only be part of the solution, a message that we continually carry in our policy work.

As our different programmes suggest, legal support needs are diverse and require a range of services and strategies to meet individual circumstances. In turn, it is necessary to use multiple data collection methods to determine the impact of programmes, support and training. We are still collecting data from across our programmes for 2021, so the data in this report primarily focuses on our impact over the 2020 period, though in places we are able to look at impact over a wider timeframe.

This report provides an overview of each of our programmes and support areas, and provides a basis for informing and formulating a theory of change. We are currently consulting both internally and externally with stakeholders on a LawWorks theory of change, as we look to develop and inform our next three-year strategy.

# LawWorks Programmes & Activity

A theory of change approach



**Pro Bono Connect** helps barristers and solicitors to collaborate on pro bono cases

Solicitors needing barrister assistance (and vice-versa) can submit requests; the scheme matches these requests

...solicitors and barristers are matched appropriately on pro bono matters

...enabling pro bono cases to be managed end-to-end by a solicitor and barrister team, and the client to receive a more seamless service.

**LawWorks in-house legal team** train, support and supervise pro bono solicitors to develop new (secondary) specialisms and take on more in-depth pro bono casework

Cases referred by advice agencies are able to obtain specialist legal help in areas of greatest need

...with the attention and advocacy of volunteer lawyers, clients' legal problems can be progressed

.. enabling clients to obtain justice, better financial outcomes, and gain capability and confidence. Those volunteering build up knowledge through structured training and supervision.

**Free Legal Answers** provides a platform where individuals on a low income, and not eligible for legal aid, can request initial or one-off advice about a specific civil legal issue from a volunteer lawyer

Referral organisations refer individuals who are on a low annual income; solicitors register on the platform to assist

Clients receive online initial advice

...enabling clients to better understand their legal issues and take appropriate steps to resolve their legal problems.

**LawWorks policy work, knowledge-sharing, communications and external events** provide opportunities for the development of knowledge and best practice in the pro bono sector, new collaborations and partnerships

LawWorks offers wider programmes of engagement to share best practice, insights, and advocate for change.

...cultivates a "pro bono community", giving this community a voice

...enabling a positive environment for the development of pro bono within the profession, advice sector and wider access to justice landscape, including its contribution to policy change.





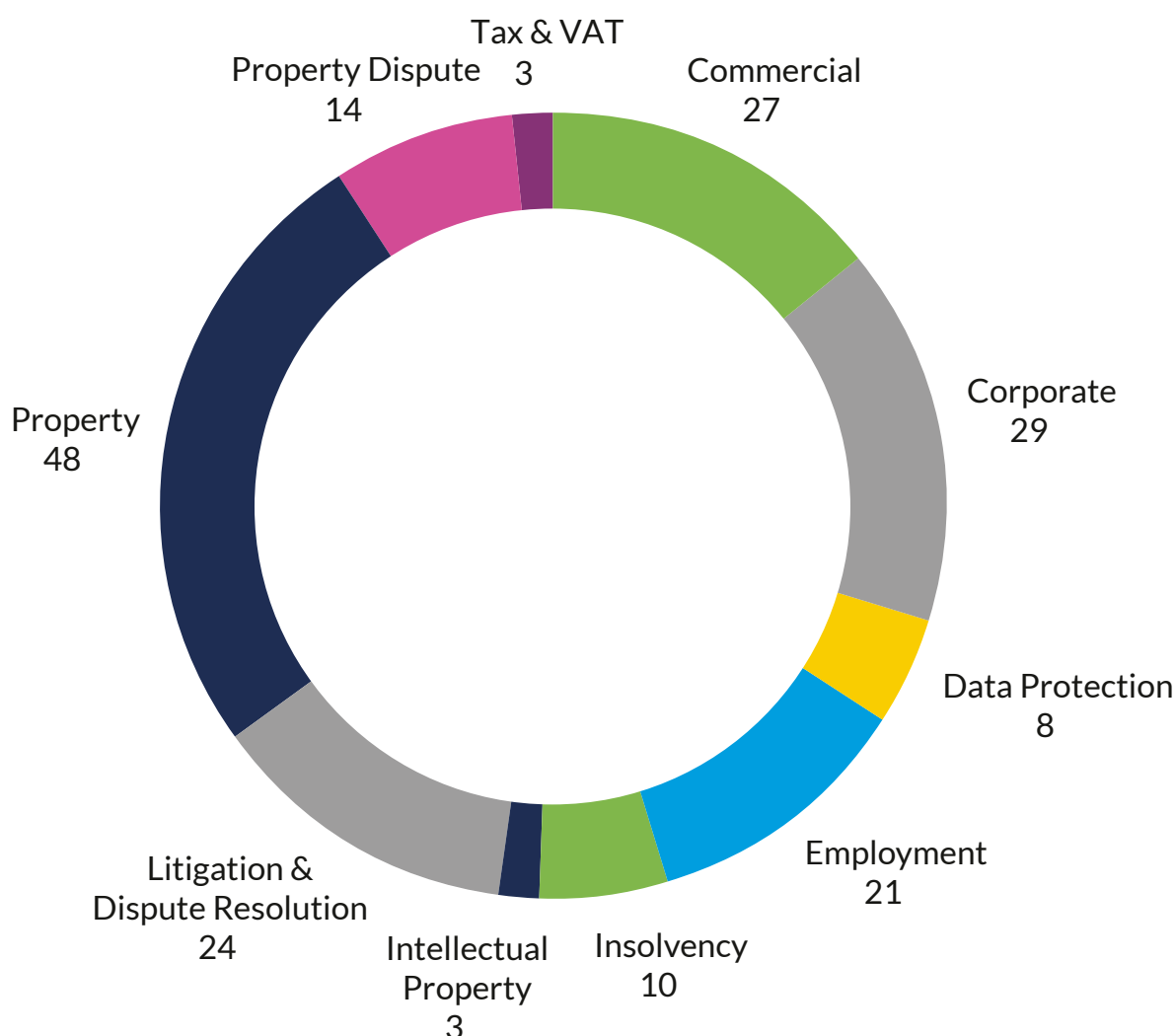
# The Not-for-Profits Programme

The LawWorks Not-for-Profits Programme brokers pro bono legal help to smaller charities and not-for-profit organisations, who do not have the means to pay for legal advice.

The range of support varies, from one-off legal advice for a discrete matter (**Casework Service**), to brokering long-term relationships with a team of solicitors, who carry out a legal “health check” and remain on hand to support the client in identifying legal issues (**Honorary Counsel Service**).

Resources are also co-created with LawWorks member firms and in-house teams and made available on the LawWorks website. These include free, downloadable legal briefings, as well as webinars (**Free Talks**).

## Help provided by area of law



## Organisations we have supported

By supporting organisations who provide a crucial service to their community, our impact reaches beyond individual organisations, allowing their staff and volunteers to deliver uninterrupted services to their beneficiaries.



# 100%



**PLACEMENT OF ELIGIBLE APPLICATIONS**

# 100%



**OF VOLUNTEERS WOULD TAKE ON ANOTHER CASE AND/OR RECOMMEND COLLEAGUES TO DO SO**

## Our impact

In 2020, the Not-for-Profits Programme provided pro bono support on **244** cases, across England and Wales, by connecting volunteer lawyers from **46 firms and in-house teams** with not-for-profit organisations in need of legal advice.<sup>4</sup> This was an increase on both 2019 (219 cases) and 2018 (148 cases). The work of the programme includes conducting initial casework and drafting briefing documents for volunteer solicitors, who are then paired with the programme's beneficiaries.

The organisations and projects supported work for the most vulnerable and disadvantaged in our society, including dealing with poverty, disability, abuse, social exclusion, and special educational needs. In 2020 the reported number of beneficiaries of the charities we helped was **2,435,678**. [Our Not-for-Profits Programme Annual Report](#) analyses how the charities we support through the programme contribute towards the UN Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).<sup>5</sup>

In response to an identified need for pro bono legal advice on registering a charity, LawWorks launched a **Charity Registration Service**, currently in its pilot phase.

In addition to brokering advice, with the support of our members we produced a range of new resources to help not-for-profits respond to the unique effects of the pandemic on their work. These resources were published on LawWorks' website as part of a temporary Covid-19 response webpage. As of January 2021, we had **2,230 page visits and 1,200 resource downloads**.

# 100%



**OF NOT-FOR-PROFIT ORGANISATIONS SAID THEY WOULD SEEK (OR HAVE ALREADY SOUGHT) LEGAL ASSISTANCE FROM LAWWORKS AGAIN**

# 100%



**OF NOT-FOR-PROFIT ORGANISATIONS SAID THE SUPPORT INCREASED GOVERNANCE AND ORGANISATIONAL EFFICIENCIES**

# 94%



**FELT MORE CONFIDENT TO DEAL WITH LEGAL ISSUES IN THE FUTURE**

*"Your support with the charity registration process has prevented this huge step from feeling daunting or unachievable and has enabled us to become a charity at a vital time."*

—Charity Registration service user

*"The service and expertise provided... was second to none. They listened to our requirements, asked pertinent questions and produced a brilliant, professional and robust document, which has been highly useful..."*

—Casework service user

*"I feel that I have a safety net and friendly support network that I can call upon. I am so grateful for the support of our Honorary Counsel and to LawWorks for making this all happen."*

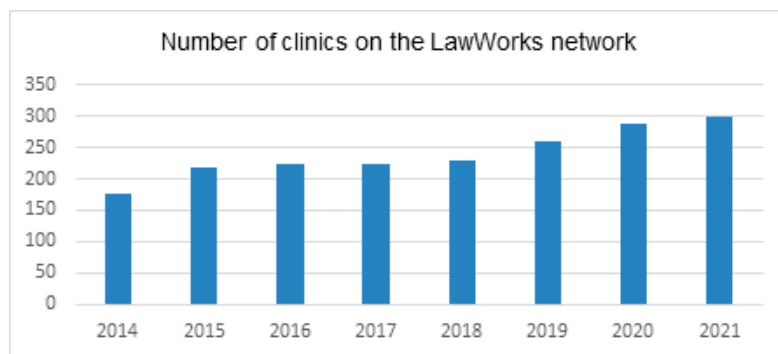
—Honorary Counsel service user

# LawWorks Clinics Network

Our clinic support and development officers, working across all regions in England and in Wales, support a growing network of independent legal advice clinics, enabling us to facilitate increased access to free legal help. Clinics are run by a diverse range of stakeholders and partnerships: by law schools, advice agencies, charities and community groups, and law firms and in-house legal teams.

## YEARLY GROWTH AND REACH OF CLINICS

As of June 2021 there were 300 clinics across England and Wales in the LawWorks Clinics Network. This is a year-on-year growth, although during 2020 not all clinics were operational due to the pandemic.



Clinics in the LawWorks network range from providing generalist support across a broad range of legal issues, to specialist clinics focused on identified need, such as homelessness, immigration or social welfare. Most clinics provide initial advice. Over 40% of clinics on the LawWorks network are based at law schools; these clinics also contribute to student learning and development - in December 2020 we published a separate [report on law school clinics and pro bono](#).<sup>6</sup>

## OF CLINICS ON THE NETWORK IN 2020:

 **90% OFFERED  
INITIAL ADVICE**

 **55% OFFERED  
WRITTEN ADVICE**

 **33% OFFERED  
FORM FILLING**

 **21% OFFERED  
CASEWORK**

## **16% OFFERED REPRESENTATION**

In March 2020, when the first national lockdown and homeworking guidance were introduced, clinics had to pivot to remote service delivery. The LawWorks clinics team also worked proactively to establish how many clinics were able to operate remotely and to support this transition; by the end of the year, to the best of our knowledge, 189 clinics were operating remotely.

### **CLINICS OPERATING OR TRANSITIONED TO REMOTE SERVICES:**

In 2020

# 189



Clinics transformed to offer a remote service

### **VOLUNTEERS IN CLINICS**

Across the network clinics reported that during 2020 there were 9,045 volunteers; this included students, qualified lawyers and other volunteers.



Using our learning about successful clinic models, we provide help and support to clinics including resources such as regulatory guidance, operational processes and template documents for clinic volunteer staff and co-ordinators (see **pages 26-27** of this report on training and resources). We support clinics to deliver consistent, high-quality advice to those accessing pro bono legal help. We help ensure that clinic volunteers and staff have the expertise and processes in place to provide meaningful supervision and effective monitoring for the advice and support provided.

**ENQUIRIES AND PEOPLE HELPED**

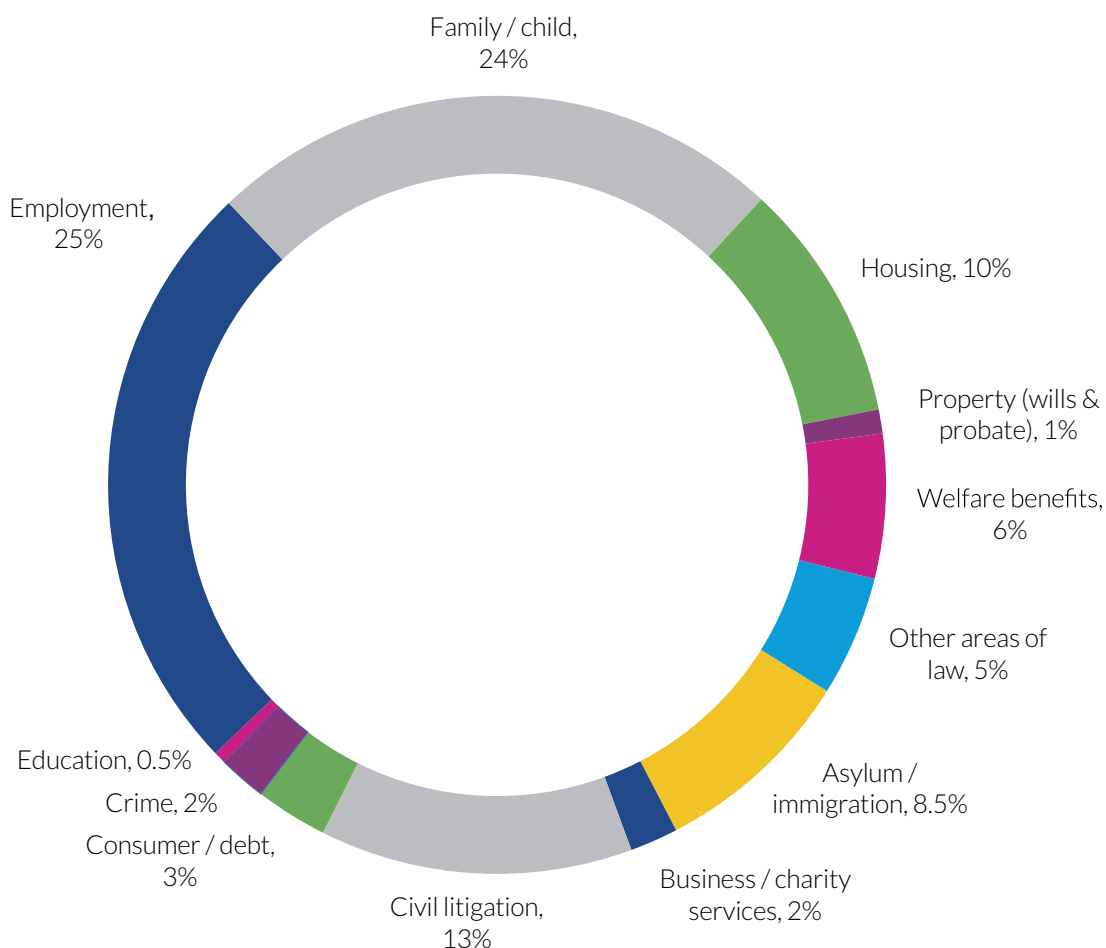
To support our clinics monitoring, we capture data over the calendar year, and record the type of support provided to individual clients. In 2020, 49,651 separate enquiries were reported, and 87% of enquiries resulted in either advice (56%) or signposting (31%). This is a reduction in the number of enquiries (77,550) and people helped (70,261) recorded over 2019, however this reflects the impact Covid-19 had on clinic operations, and the capacity to collect data given their migration to remote service delivery.



We also know from our website that in 2020 there were 148,462 page views of our clinics search page.

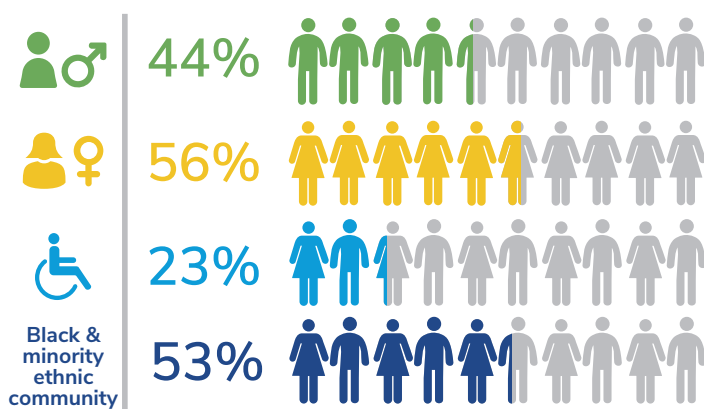
### HELP PROVIDED BY AREA OF LAW

The largest number of enquiries at clinics in the LawWorks network are for family and employment law matters.



### CLIENT DEMOGRAPHICS

The proportion of women, people with disabilities and people from black and minority ethnic communities accessing clinics is higher than the general population.



## LAWWORKS CYMRU

In 2020 we were awarded a grant by the National Lotteries Community Fund to continue to support the development of pro bono in Wales, focussing on new clinics, collaborations and volunteer training. The Cardiff Homelessness Clinic and the Cardiff LGBTQ+ clinic are two recent examples of collaborative clinic models we have supported in developing and launching.

## CLINIC SUPPORT, NETWORKING AND FEEDBACK

LawWorks have supported clinics throughout the pandemic, including holding monthly online “Info-exchanges”, providing practical tools, and publishing new resources (see page 27). In 2020, 500 clinic staff and volunteers attended multiple networking, hub meetings and monthly info-exchange events to share learning and insight on providing pro bono help. In June 2020 we were joined online by over 200 people attending our LawWorks Clinics Network conference, addressing “The Power of Pro Bono in changing times”. The success of our first online conference enabled us to repeat this model in 2021 with our third national clinics conference on “Legal Pro Bono: Facing the Future.”

### Panel 1: Delivering differently

Chair:

**Simon Davey**, Omega Alpha

Panellists:

**Martin Barnes**, LawWorks

**Kate Fazio**, Justice Connect

**Elizabeth Williams**, University of Surrey

**Adam Wyner**, Swansea University



### Panel 3: Maximising volunteer impact

Chair:

**Rebecca Wilkie**, Litigant in Person Support Strategy

Panellists:

**Jane Basham**, Norfolk Community Law Service

**Rebecca Greenhalgh**, Ashurst

**Tracey Horton**, Staffordshire University

**Deborah Smith**, Goldman Sachs



At the 2020 conference we also launched an online clinics forum, creating a new space for clinic coordinators to communicate and share their experiences of running clinics with colleagues from across the clinics network.



## FEEDBACK ABOUT THE SUPPORT AND EVENTS PROVIDED BY LAWWORKS FOR CLINICS INCLUDED:

*"Thank you all in the team for these info sessions and for your support generally."*

*"Very grateful for the event, it was well presented and very timely."*

*Brilliant, fantastically well-organised event. My very first LawWorks event, and what an introduction!*

*"The talks about covid related changes have been extremely valuable, both for the experience that has been shared very generously and also for providing a forum for us to discuss issues. More of these, as we proceed, will be very useful."*

*"Very relevant and so good to see what others are experiencing and realising we are doing ok!"*

*Just to say thank you for an excellent virtual conference. Great topics, speakers and tech management!"*

Further information about clinics in the network can be found in our [Annual Clinics Reports](#).<sup>7</sup>

# In-depth pro bono casework

LawWorks 'Secondary Specialisation' projects support solicitors to provide casework and representation in specific areas of law—welfare benefits, employment (unpaid wages) and social care (including housing adaptations)—through bespoke training and supervision. Cases are referred from our partner organisations to our in-house team, who supervise volunteer solicitors to undertake in-depth casework.



**ACROSS ALL THREE PROJECTS, VOLUNTEER SOLICITORS RATE THEIR EXPERIENCE OF VOLUNTEERING ON THE PROGRAMMES “VERY HIGHLY”**

## UNPAID WAGES CASES (2020):

**£11,050**

**OF UNPAID WAGES WERE RECOVERED FOR CLIENTS IN 2020**

- **53 NEW CASES WERE OPENED**
- **17 CASES WERE CLOSED OF WHICH**
- **2 WENT TO TRIBUNAL**
- **OTHERS SETTLED OR WERE CLOSED BY THE CLIENT**

## WELFARE BENEFITS CASES (2020):

**79%**



**SUCCESS RATE AT TRIBUNAL**

- **44 NEW CASES WERE OPENED**
- **24 OF THESE WENT TO TRIBUNAL**

Both programmes were temporarily paused for new claims between March and May due to the impact of the first lockdown on the tribunal system.

## Community Care (2020)

This project is a partnership with the charity Together for Short Lives. It assists with legal rights for children who are life-limited, and their carers and families.<sup>8</sup>

**50** 

**OPEN CASES,  
58 CASES CLOSED**

### OUTCOMES HAVE INCLUDED:

- **3 CLIENTS REHOUSED**
- **2 CLIENTS HAD HOME ADAPTIONS MADE**
- **5 CARE PACKAGE HOURS HAVE BEEN INCREASED**

# Example impacts of our casework programmes

## Social care

Fiona's niece, Caitrin, was born with severe brain damage and was not expected to survive her first 24 hours after the ventilator was switched off. Against all odds she survived, and Fiona obtained a Special Guardianship Order to care for Caitrin. In addition to her brain injury, Caitrin has a range of needs and is fed through a nasal gastric tube. Fiona found childcare for Caitrin for three days per week. However, despite correspondence with her local authority, Fiona could not obtain a parent carer's needs assessments, to secure funds for Caitrin's care. Fiona needed legal help but was unable to pay. Fortunately, she discovered at Caitrin's local hospice that she could obtain free legal advice from a solicitor through LawWorks. The solicitor drafted a lengthy letter to the local authority, setting out in detail their obligations and responsibilities towards Caitrin and Fiona.

Fiona's local authority then agreed to the parent carer's needs assessment and Fiona returned to work without loss of income.

*"Without having the funds to pay for childcare, I would not have been able to go back to work after one year was up and I would therefore have lost my job. The lawyer was able to write a long letter which basically encouraged my local authority to get on with it. Time was running out for me...I'm very grateful to the lawyer for her help."*

## Welfare benefits

Aisha is a 63 year-old woman who suffers from a number of health problems, including chronic kidney disease, type 2 diabetes and a skin condition, was also diagnosed with breast cancer in 2008. Trauma caused by surgery at that time causes chronic pain in Aisha's right arm which, in addition to her other conditions, adds to difficulties in carrying out daily tasks. She has to rely on very strong medication, affecting her alertness and leaving her drowsy. Aisha received Disability Living Allowance but had to complete further forms to transition to Personal Independence Payment (PIP). After a medical assessment, and despite the severity of her conditions, the Department of Work and Pensions (DWP) awarded her nil points when they assessed her claim, which meant that she was not entitled to any benefit at all. Aisha, who does not speak fluent English, and her husband could not afford to pay for a lawyer but were referred to LawWorks for free legal advice.

The volunteer solicitors supported by LawWorks obtained further medical evidence, prepared a written submission in support of Aisha's case and represented her at her remote tribunal hearing on the telephone, with the help of an interpreter. The tribunal took only 30 minutes to overturn the decision of the DWP and awarded Aisha the maximum number of points she could obtain for a PIP award, giving her a total annual benefit payment of £4,635, in addition to arrears from the date of her application. Unusually, she was also granted PIP for an indefinite period.

Aisha has nothing but praise for LawWorks and the volunteer solicitors. She says,

*"They supported us at a time when we had nowhere else to turn. The benefit payments have made a real difference to my life because I can now afford to buy the clothes and food that I need. I was treated with respect and kindness by the lawyers and I'm so grateful to them for their help."*

## Unpaid wages

Claire started working as PA for a start-up company and was then asked to take on more HR tasks. She found that she needed to buy quite a few items for the company (subscriptions, stationary, and other work products) purchasing them with her own money, because she trusted her employer and felt it was the right thing to do because the company was in its early stages.

After being with the company for one and a half years, she found that it was not a healthy work environment, with claims of bullying and a level of fear felt by employees. Claire realised she had no alternative but to resign, which she did, as well as submitting a claim for her expenses, totalling nearly £4,000. However, her request for reimbursement was completely ignored by the company. Claire had not found alternative employment and could not afford to pay for legal advice. She found the advice she received from ACAS confusing because her claim against the company did not involve unpaid wages. A Citizens Advice service referred Claire to LawWorks where she found immediate support. She was put in touch with two volunteer solicitors who wrote a 'letter before action' to her former employer. The company responded disputing the expenses claim. The volunteer solicitors advised Claire that it would be sensible to make the company a settlement offer of £3,500 to avoid tribunal proceedings. Claire agreed and the company paid within six hours of receipt of the offer.

Claire says that she felt the support she received from LawWorks and the volunteer solicitors was reassuring from the start and the relief she felt, knowing that she was justified in pursuing her claim, was overwhelming.

*"If I hadn't found LawWorks I would have given up. I would have been too stressed to take the employer to the tribunal on my own – my confidence and self-esteem had been completely knocked by the experience. I never got the impression that the lawyers were too busy for me – I'm so grateful to them for their support."*

# Pro Bono Connect

Pro Bono Connect is a scheme, in England and Wales, which connects solicitors and barristers to work together to litigate civil pro bono cases. Originally developed by Jamie Goldsmith QC, LawWorks took over governance of the scheme in late 2019, and it has been supported by an Executive Officer since April 2020.

A solicitor needing barrister assistance (and vice-versa) can submit a request form outlining a brief summary of the case and the assistance which is required - this might be for a specific piece of work or for general assistance throughout the case. If more than one offer is received, then the requesting solicitor and client select who they choose to instruct. Once selected, the barrister is instructed in the usual way.

## OVER 2020:

# 47

**BARRISTERS' CHAMBERS, UP 20% FROM 2019, INCLUDING REGIONAL AND SPECIALIST SETS.**

# 47

**CASES REFERRED IN 2020 WITH 75% SUCCESSFULLY PLACED**

# 35

**OVER FIRMS AND 16 CHAMBERS MADE OFFERS TO ACCEPT CASES**

# 42

**SOLICITOR MEMBERS, UP 25% FROM 2019, INCLUDES INTERNATIONAL, CITY, REGIONAL AND SMALLER FIRMS**

## Case Study

The tragic death of baby Harry Richford in 2017, as a result of catastrophic errors during his birth at Margate's Queen Elizabeth the Queen Mother Hospital, was the subject of a widely publicised coronial inquest in the North East Kent Coroner's Court that concluded in January 2020. The Pro Bono Connect scheme was instrumental in ensuring that Harry's parents, Sarah and Tom, were properly represented by counsel and solicitors at the inquest.

The family always believed that Harry's death was a result of serious failings in both the obstetrics care Sarah received and the neonatology care Harry received, and had been searching for answers from the Trust for over two years. However, they were repeatedly told that only minimal errors had taken place, and there was no need for an inquest to be conducted. Indeed, an inquest would not have been called had it not been for the family themselves.

Sarah and Tom Richford sought pro bono representation for the inquest through Advocate, as they were unable to afford legal representation. Barristers from Brick Court Chambers agreed to represent the Richfords, but the complexity and magnitude of the inquest meant that they would also require urgent solicitor assistance to prepare for, and assist the counsel team during, the inquest itself. The barristers therefore made a request for solicitor assistance through Pro Bono Connect, which connected them with the law firm Arnold & Porter Kaye Scholer LLP. Jacqueline Mulryne, Louise Strom and Giles Harvey of Arnold & Porter acted, together with the counsel team of Jennifer MacLeod and Emma Mockford, for the Richfords pro bono for the course of the inquest.

The inquest ultimately lasted for three weeks, during which evidence was given by 34 witnesses, including doctors, nurses and midwives involved in Harry's care, senior management at the East Kent University Hospitals Trust, and experts on obstetrics, paediatrics, neonatology and pathology. The Coroner ruled on 24 January 2020 that Harry's death was wholly avoidable, and had been caused by numerous gross failings on the part of the East Kent University NHS Trust, which amounted to neglect.

*"Mothers and babies will be safer because of their actions and I thank them from the bottom of my heart."*

*"[The entire legal team] worked tirelessly, professionally and with deep compassion... Without the help of [Arnold & Porter and Brick Court Chambers] we would not have achieved justice for Harry or indeed for Tom and Sarah his parents".*  
—A member of the Richford family



# Free Legal Answers

Free Legal Answers is a website where people on low incomes can describe a legal problem or ask a legal question, and receive pro bono legal advice (currently on housing, employment, contract and debt and family law matters).

Free Legal Answers is based on a service in the United States, supported by the American Bar Association. LawWorks was granted a licence to launch a similar website service in England and Wales. Deloitte Legal kindly provided project management and technical expertise to assist LawWorks in configuring and testing the website to fit the legal environment in England and Wales.

The Free Legal Answers pilot was launched in May 2020. Rather than promote the service directly to the general public, individuals are referred to the service by participating organisations who may also assist individuals to use the website. We are ambitious for many more lawyers to take part in Free Legal Answers and to significantly increase the number of people provided with pro bono legal advice.

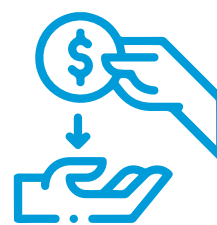
## IN 2020:

# 129

**CLIENTS WERE  
ASSISTED IN THE  
FOLLOWING AREAS  
OF LAW:**



**FAMILY LAW  
53 ENQUIRIES**



**EMPLOYMENT  
20 ENQUIRIES**



**HOUSING  
26 ENQUIRIES**



**DEBT  
27 ENQUIRIES**

# +13

**OTHER  
ENQUIRIES**

## Mohamed – Debts and Purchases

Due to some faulty work that had been done to Mohamed's roof, Mohamed had in place a mediation agreement with the contractor. Mohamed had received partial repayment, but now the contractor was in breach of the mediation agreement. Mohamed asked Free Legal Answers how he should fill out the N244 and N225 forms in regards to a breach of mediation.

The lawyer advised that the next steps were dependent on whether the mediation settlement/agreement: was enshrined in a formal court order; or if it expressly provided that you could apply to court for an order enshrining the agreement; or if it made clear that the parties could revive the original court claim in the event of a breach of the mediation settlement. If the answer to all of these is 'no' then they advised that Mohamed may need to commence an entirely new claim, for breach of the settlement/mediation agreement, however, if the answer to one of the above questions is yes, then depending on the precise terms of the agreement he may be able to revive the claim or enforce the agreement.

# Other digital projects

In 2020 we also started development, piloting and support work on two digital projects with significant potential to extend the reach and capacity of pro bono, and to make the process more efficient both for lawyers and people seeking legal advice and support.

## The Pro Bono Portal UK

The Pro Bono Portal UK helps connect lawyers with pro bono advice, casework, representation and a range of other legal and non-legal volunteering opportunities. The pro bono matters are first triaged/submitted by advice agencies, law centres and others, and then made available on the Portal. Developed originally by Justice Connect (an Australian access to justice charity), the initial pilot was part of a project (working with PILnet) to introduce the award-winning platform in different international legal jurisdictions.

We are now looking across LawWorks to scope where the platform has the potential to include existing LawWorks projects and programmes, and working with stakeholders to understand how the Portal can support the pro bono and advice sector as a whole (becoming a national one-stop shop for pro bono volunteering), including other organisations having direct access and use for their pro bono requests and opportunities. We have, for example, established an advisory group to work with us on maximising the full potential of the Portal and our other digital projects.

## The Jeanie Project

The Jeanie Project is a registered charity established to relieve financial hardship “by assisting in the provision of legal services and advice”. The charity developed and piloted a new software platform named after the charity. The free platform enables front-line staff and volunteers (in community groups and other local settings) to go through structured scenarios and questions with vulnerable clients with legal problems. Pro bono lawyers and others can access the ‘triaged’ information remotely and decide whether to take on a case. A pilot (and evaluation) was successful in delivering a ‘proof of concept’ for the platform. After coming under the auspices of LawWorks, initial funding was secured for a dedicated staff post, and significant improvements were made to the platform’s design and ease of use. The platform will be rolled out in early 2022.

# Pro bono training, resources and events

Keeping connected; sharing best practice, expertise and ideas; and having opportunities to upskill and work differently became ever more important during Covid-19.

## The need for training and information

Our training and resources are valued by LawWorks members, clinics and other stakeholders. We facilitate around 50 training sessions a year, covering a broad range of topics and legal issues and, since March 2020, all sessions have been delivered remotely using Zoom.

Training helps to equip pro bono volunteers with knowledge and relevant skills and confidence, including working with vulnerable clients.

# 45

**TRAINING SESSIONS  
DELIVERED OVER 2020**

# 1,600

**ATTENDEES AT  
LAWWORKS TRAINING  
SESSIONS**

## WHAT ATTENDEES SAY:

*Really enjoyed the training. Although it ran over time was able to access training notes so did not miss anything. Thank you.*

*The quality of the training was really high. One of the best I have attended.*

*Great training session and updates during lockdown.*

*I think this is an excellent service. I intend to catch up on all of the training [online] that is relevant to our clinic over the summer.*

*It was a very useful webinar and it made us look at our processes and how to improve our Data Protection compliance.*

*I didn't realise that LawWorks had such brilliant training resources freely available and will absolutely be completing more training in future.*

*Excellent quality of training. The same for the welfare benefits training I attended earlier this year.*

*Outstanding delivery and content - well done keep it up.*

We also held a range of practice focussed and thought leadership events, including events in Pro Bono Week on topics such as the ethics of pro bono, and pro bono and the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

## LawWorks Resources

Our online resources and web content, to support pro bono practices, has expanded significantly over the period of the pandemic, with the content made more widely accessible and open-sourced. The suite of resources include regulatory and operational guidance, template policies, and (for clinics in the LawWorks Network) free access to practical tools such as LexisNexis PSL, Intralinks and CLIO to assist with legal research, document storage and case management.

As well as producing new resources in 2020, we have added materials, presentations and videos from all of our training sessions, InfoExchanges and events to our suite of online resources. Resources and guidance produced by LawWorks during the year included:

- Regulatory guidance, relating to pro bono, revised in light of SRA changes, and bespoke regulatory guidance for in house teams<sup>9</sup>
- Office of the Immigration Services Commissioner (OISC) requirements for immigration clinics<sup>10</sup>
- Designing accessible services<sup>11</sup>
- Supporting clinics moving to an online/remote service<sup>12</sup>
- For firms on developing a 'business case' for pro bono<sup>13</sup>
- Furlough and legal pro bono volunteering<sup>14</sup>
- General guidance on Covid restrictions

## Student induction resources

Our resources include a range of induction and training videos for law students starting as clinic volunteers – these complement our work with the Clinical Legal Education Organisation (CLEO) and others to encourage widespread involvement of law students and law schools in pro bono activity.<sup>15</sup>

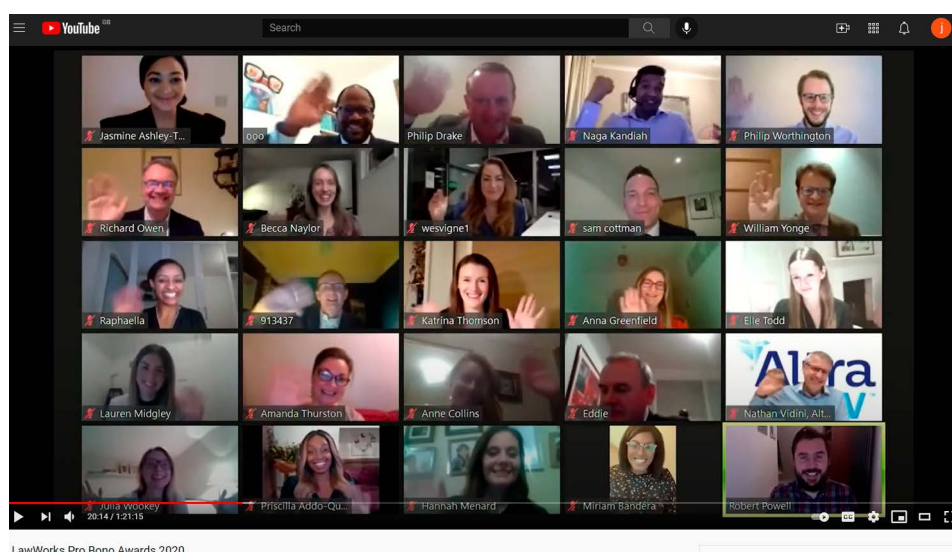
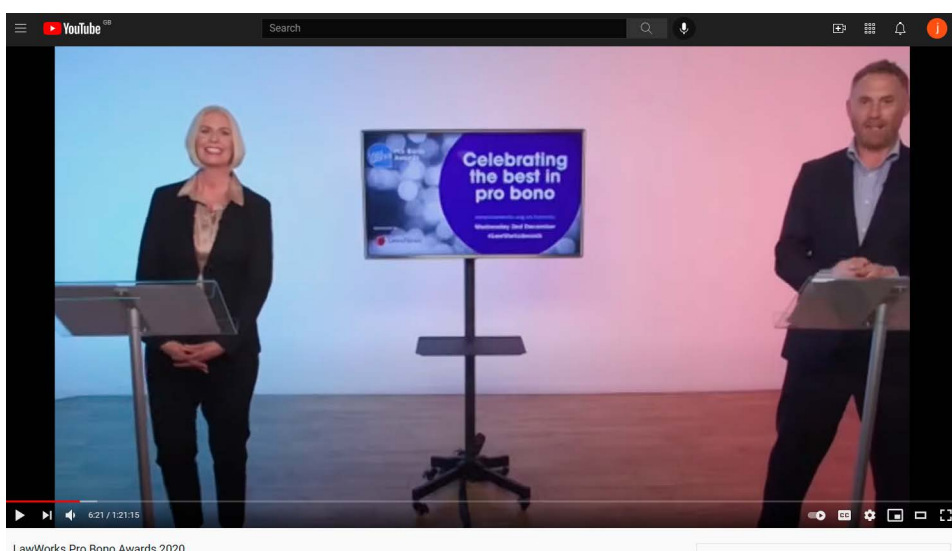
**THERE WERE**  
**36,268** **PAGE**  
**VIEWS OF OUR ONLINE**  
**RESOURCES AND TRAINING**  
**PAGES IN 2020**

# Celebrating pro bono

To recognise the impact of pro bono volunteers, we organise two major award events each year, celebrating outstanding achievements in pro bono, and highlighting the positive impact that pro bono projects have for individuals and communities. Both awards were kindly sponsored by LexisNexis.

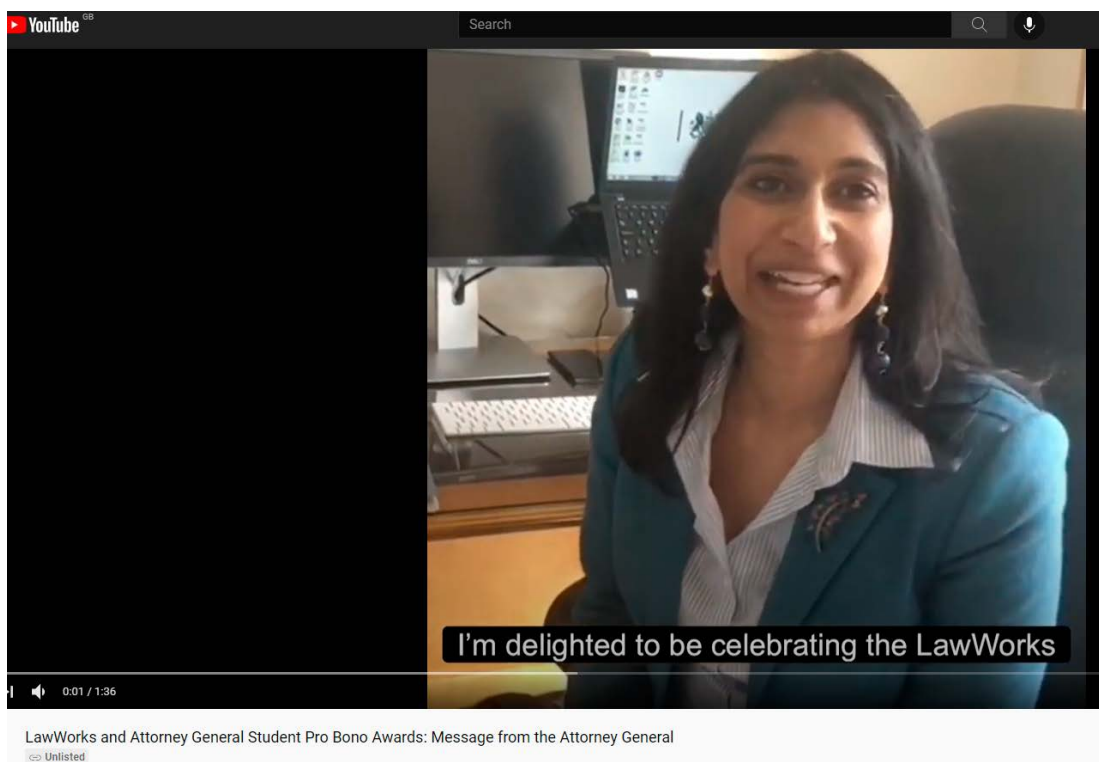
## LawWorks Pro Bono Awards

The LawWorks Pro Bono Awards 2020 took place remotely, livestreamed with online interaction with the winners.<sup>16</sup>



# LawWorks and Attorney General Student Pro Bono Awards

The 2020 LawWorks and Attorney General Student Pro Bono Awards were announced in May with a video message of congratulations from the Attorney General, the Rt Hon Suella Braverman QC MP.<sup>17</sup>





# LawWorks policy voice

## Advocating for access to justice

A key aim for LawWorks is to address barriers to pro bono engagement and to contribute a pro bono 'policy voice' to wider issues to enable access to justice. Our policy work draws on the experience and expertise of pro bono clinics, our members, and partners. Working collaboratively, we aim through our policy work to:

1. Communicate both the value of pro bono and also its limits,
2. Address systematic issues that result in need and create barriers to access to justice,
3. Develop an evidence base on unmet need, and best practice in pro bono, using the insights and data from our programmes.

LawWorks also provides the secretariat for the All Party Parliamentary Group (APPG) on Pro Bono and Public Legal Education, and regularly hold and speak at Party Conference events. Our CEO is a member of the Civil Justice Council (CJC) and the CJC's Standing committee on access to justice for people without means.

## Legal and advice sector roundtable

As part of a collective response to the public health crisis, LawWorks helped to facilitate a legal and advice sector roundtable, bringing together a wide range of legal, advice and access to justice organisations to discuss issues, challenges and legal needs raised by the impact of Covid-19. This forum, which met monthly and continues to meet, also served as a valuable conduit for communication and information exchange with statutory stakeholders, including the Ministry of Justice, the Courts and Tribunals Service (HMCTS), the Legal Aid Agency, and the Legal Services Board.

## The Litigants in Person Support Strategy

LawWorks is a partner in the Litigants in Person Support Strategy (LIPSS), with Law for Life, RCJ Advice, Support through Court, Advocate, and the Access to Justice Foundation, and has led on policy work on behalf of the partners. Joint work has included:

- Briefing MPs on the Domestic Abuse Bill and the Divorce, Dissolution and Separation Bill (now both Acts of Parliament)<sup>18</sup>
- A submission to the Comprehensive Spending Review (CSR)<sup>19</sup>
- A submission to the Justice Select Committee Inquiry on Court Capacity<sup>20</sup>

## Submissions, briefings and engagement on particular topics

### ACCESS TO JUSTICE ISSUES

LawWorks have contributed on access to justice issues following on from the Government's review of the Legal Aid Sentencing and Punishment of Offenders (LASPO) Act and the publication of the Government's Legal Support Action Plan. We were called to give oral evidence to the House of Lords Constitution Committee Inquiry on Covid-19 and the Courts, and provided written submissions to the Justice Select Committee's Inquiry on the Future of Legal Aid, as well as (with LIPS Strategy Partners) the Committee's Inquiry on Court Capacity. We also supported and provided evidence for the Westminster Legal Aid Commission (an inquiry established by the APPG on Legal Aid and the Legal Aid Practitioners Group).

### REGULATORY AND TRAINING CHALLENGES IN THE LEGAL SECTOR

LawWorks have continued to engage with regulators, providing submissions to strategy and business plan consultations from the Legal Services Board and the Solicitors Regulation Authority (SRA).<sup>21</sup>

Our previous work with the SRA helped paved the way, under their handbook, towards a more permissive approach to practising as a pro bono volunteer.<sup>22</sup>

We have addressed issues around perceived restrictions on pro bono for in-house practitioners under the Legal Services Act, and obtained some assurances in line with regulators' more permissive approach.

A particular issue that arose during the pandemic was around volunteering whilst on furlough; we sought clarification of the Government's furlough guidance, obtained a legal opinion, and encouraged the SRA to cover volunteering in their furlough guidance.<sup>23</sup>

We also worked with the Clinical Legal Education Organisation (CLEO) on key issues concerning the introduction of the Solicitors Qualifying Exam (SQE) and volunteering with clinics as part of 'qualifying work experience'.<sup>24</sup> Opportunities are continuing to grow as explored in our Law School Clinics and Pro Bono Report.<sup>25</sup>

This report, based on an extensive survey of law schools and law students provides a 'deep dive' into law schools' current pro bono programmes, and looks at how student pro bono has developed in recent years.

## **PUBLIC PROCUREMENT**

LawWorks provided a response to the Government's Green Paper on transforming public procurement, raising issues around legal services procurement and access to justice.<sup>26</sup> The submission explores how incentives to undertake pro bono might be built into the procurement process, based on models in Australia and Ireland.

## **RULE OF LAW, LAW REFORM AND PUBLIC LEGAL EDUCATION ISSUES**

Recent constitutional reviews have raised concerns about rule of law issues. LawWorks made submissions to the Independent Review of Administrative Law (IRAL) and the Independent Human Rights Act Review (IHRA).

As the Law Commission prepares its next (14<sup>th</sup>) law reform programme we made a submission on key law reform issues, such as the regulation of automated decision-making, family justice procedures, and strengthening employment rights protections.<sup>27</sup>

A report from the Law Commission (under its 13<sup>th</sup> programme) on the powers of Employment Tribunals,<sup>28</sup> quoted a LawWorks submission in support of its proposals; the submission drew on our previous responses to the Taylor Review and the "Good Work" programme and referenced casework evidence from our unpaid wages project.<sup>29</sup>

We have also continued to work with the Solicitor General's Public Legal Education (PLE) Committee, building on the vision statement for Public Legal Education.<sup>30</sup>

# LawWorks Membership

You can get involved, support pro bono and our work in various ways.

Might your organisation consider joining LawWorks and become part of a network of 150 law firms, in-house teams and organisations committed to providing access to justice for the most vulnerable in our communities?

Our [membership brochure](#) will tell you more about what we offer and how you can get involved.

# Endnotes

- 1 Our Strategy (2019-21) [https://www.lawworks.org.uk/sites/default/files/files/LawWorks%20Strategyfoweb\\_1.pdf](https://www.lawworks.org.uk/sites/default/files/files/LawWorks%20Strategyfoweb_1.pdf)
- 2 <https://www.lawworks.org.uk/about-us/our-members>. For more detail on our membership offer see our members' brochure.
- 3 <https://legalservicesboard.org.uk/state-of-legal-services-report-2020>
- 4 <https://www.lawworks.org.uk/about-us/news/lawworks-not-profits-programme-annual-report-2020>
- 5 <https://www.lawworks.org.uk/sites/default/files/LW-NfPP-AnnualReport-2021-web.pdf>
- 6 <https://www.lawworks.org.uk/solicitors-and-volunteers/resources/lawworks-law-school-pro-bono-and-clinics-report-2020>
- 7 <https://www.lawworks.org.uk/solicitors-and-volunteers/resources/lawworks-clinics-network-report-2020>
- 8 <https://www.lawworks.org.uk/solicitors-and-volunteers/get-involved/secondary-specialisation/pro-bono-opportunities-together>
- 9 <https://www.lawworks.org.uk/solicitors-and-volunteers/resources/lawworks-practice-guidance>
- 10 <https://www.lawworks.org.uk/solicitors-and-volunteers/resources/oisc-regulation-and-clinics>
- 11 <https://www.lawworks.org.uk/solicitors-and-volunteers/resources/designing-accessible-services>
- 12 <https://www.lawworks.org.uk/solicitors-and-volunteers/resources/clinics-guidance-support-moving-onlinereote-service>
- 13 <https://www.lawworks.org.uk/why-pro-bono/business-case-pro-bono>
- 14 <https://www.lawworks.org.uk/solicitors-and-volunteers/resources/covid-19-legal-pro-bono-and-volunteering-while-furlough>
- 15 <https://www.lawworks.org.uk/solicitors-and-volunteers/resources/induction-and-training-law-student-clinic-volunteers>
- 16 <https://www.lawworks.org.uk/solicitors-and-volunteers/get-involved/lawworks-pro-bono-awards/lawworks-pro-bono-awards-2020>
- 17 <https://www.lawworks.org.uk/solicitors-and-volunteers/get-involved/student-pro-bono-awards/lawworks-and-attorney-general-stude-0>
- 18 <https://www.lawworks.org.uk/solicitors-and-volunteers/resources/family-law-briefing-parliamentarians>
- 19 <https://www.lawworks.org.uk/solicitors-and-volunteers/resources/submission-comprehensive-spending-review>
- 20 <https://www.lawworks.org.uk/sites/default/files/files/LIPSS-CourtCapacityComments-JSC.pdf>
- 21 <https://www.lawworks.org.uk/solicitors-and-volunteers/resources/lawworks-response-legal-services-board-2021-2022-strategy-and>
- 22 <https://www.sra.org.uk/solicitors/resources/waivers/waiver-employment-status-pro-bono-work/>
- 23 <https://www.lawworks.org.uk/solicitors-and-volunteers/resources/covid-19-legal-pro-bono-and-volunteering-while-furlough>
- 24 <https://www.lawworks.org.uk/solicitors-and-volunteers/resources/lawworks-infoexchange-qualifying-work-experience>
- 25 <https://www.lawworks.org.uk/solicitors-and-volunteers/resources/lawworks-law-school-pro-bono-and-clinics-report-2020>
- 26 <https://www.lawworks.org.uk/search/node/procurement>
- 27 <https://www.lawworks.org.uk/solicitors-and-volunteers/resources/submission-law-commission%E2%80%99s-14th-law-reform-programme>
- 28 <https://www.lawcom.gov.uk/project/employment-law-hearing-structures/>
- 29 <https://www.lawworks.org.uk/about-us/news/employment-rights-and-gig-economy>
- 30 <https://www.lawworks.org.uk/about-us/news/public-legal-education-new-vision-statement>