



**Press release – for immediate release**

**1.11.19**

## **Pro Bono Week expands to all nations of the UK**

Pro Bono Week this year takes place from Monday 4<sup>th</sup> to Friday 8<sup>th</sup> November 2019, providing an opportunity to recognise and support the voluntary contribution that lawyers make to many people and charities in need of legal help but unable to afford it. After nearly two decades of this annual celebration in England & Wales, for the first time 2019 sees events taking place across all the home nations, including Scotland and Northern Ireland.

The objective of the Week is to encourage and recognise the pro bono help given by lawyers throughout the year, and to provide substantive opportunities for debate and thought leadership on pro bono issues.

Though pro bono can only make a modest contribution to access to justice and cannot replace a properly funded legal aid system, new statistics show its important contribution, for example:-

- The number of pro bono clinics in the LawWorks network has now grown to 280. Over 2018, clinics in the network helped 47,941 people; 75% of whom received legal advice whilst 25% got further information or were referred to other services.
- Over a quarter of barristers of the entire Bar of England and Wales are signed up to volunteer through Advocate, including 85 percent of all QCs.

The scope of that work will be apparent during Pro Bono Week, when a record 30 plus events will take place over four themes:

1. **How legal volunteering makes a difference to the public** and can even lead to changes in the law. For example, on 6 November, charities and lawyers will come together at the Edinburgh Free Legal Advice Centre to discuss law in society. The next day, the Public Interest Litigation Support Project will bring together lawyers in Belfast to discuss strategic litigation and the need for pro bono support.
2. **New developments and best practice** in pro bono schemes. For example, 5 November will see the Law Society of England & Wales launch guidance on how in-house lawyers can carry out pro bono work. On 7 November, Advocates for International Development (A4ID) will discuss how lawyers can contribute to the realisation of the Sustainable Development Goals.
3. **Showcasing pro bono work and the achievements** of volunteer lawyers. For example, on 6 November Advocate will present the Bar Pro Bono Awards to barristers and chambers.

4. **Demonstrating the career value of pro bono.** For example, at an event at Middle Temple on 6 November, junior solicitors and barristers will discuss how pro bono has helped build their practices.

Other events take place in Birmingham, Edinburgh, Guildford, Leeds, Liverpool, London, Pontypridd and Swansea, organised by law firms, legal societies, charities and advice organisations, universities and law schools. Pro Bono Week 2019 is officially launched at the Law Society in London on 4 November by a panel discussion chaired by Joshua Rozenberg focussing on human rights.

Toby Brown, Chair of the Pro Bono Week organising committee said: *“We are really pleased with the breadth of events for year’s Pro Bono Week taking place across the UK, which will bring focus and debate to the important contribution that lawyers make when helping pro bono. Many lawyers like myself have seen the real impact that volunteering can make to a client’s life, but also how it can help develop your practice.”*

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### Notes to Editors

1. For further information visit <http://probonoweek.org.uk> or contact: Toby Brown, Chair, Pro Bono Week organising committee 020 7696 9900 [tobybrown@atjf.org.uk](mailto:tobybrown@atjf.org.uk)
2. Pro bono is where lawyers volunteer to provide free legal help to those in need. It is not intended to and cannot replace a properly funded legal aid system.
3. Pro Bono Week is organised by a committee which includes representatives from pro bono charities, law schools and law firms, with contributions from across the sector including Bar Council, CILEx and the Law Society. The individual events during Pro Bono Week are organised locally.
4. Details of the events taking place across the UK can be seen at <http://www.nationalprobonocentre.org.uk/event-calendar/>