



## **The National Pro Bono Centre**

### **First Year Report**

### **November 2011**

#### **Introduction**

It is now sixteen months since LawWorks, the Bar Pro Bono Unit and ILEX Pro Bono moved into their new home at the National Pro Bono Centre and twelve months since our official launch. We are delighted to report that development continues to go from strength to strength.

This report aims to build on our six month report, highlighting just some of the new opportunities and developments which have been possible since the move.

#### **General**

##### **Existing charities in the Centre**

The core work of the Bar Pro Bono Unit, LawWorks and ILEX Pro Bono continues apace, responding to the increased level of demand for all our services. Applications to the Bar Pro Bono Unit are increasing 20% year on year with requests for advice and representation nationwide in all areas of law (the most common being employment and family). LawWorks continues to develop new initiatives to harness the skills of their members. The latest development, crucial in today's environment, offers advice on restructuring to advice agencies under threat in light of the impending legal aid cuts. The charity has also received funding to work with the Law Centres Federation on remodelling the provision of immigration advice and, in a separate development, with teaching conflict resolution skills to school pupils. ILEX Pro Bono has seen a significant increase in the number of legal executives signing up to the JIB Scheme which offers support to individuals in need of legal advice.

##### **Riot helpline - a cross profession pro bono response**

A helpline was established in the summer to coordinate from the Centre work to assist small businesses and individuals who, as a result of the riots, lost premises, homes, suffered property damage, or face the consequences of loss of business. Funds to support this project were raised by the Law Society from the larger firms, who responded with alacrity and generosity to the crisis.



### **Collaboration among charities**

The charities housed in the Centre are working much more closely together than previously. This includes prior collaborations which are now far more effectively achieved and new partnerships where the potential for collaboration has been much clearer due to the proximity of the respective working spaces. It is now routine for the charities to work together across a range of activities and projects. There are monthly lunchtime gatherings for all staff based in the Centre, and regular meetings of senior staff, to ensure joined-up thinking, smooth operation of the Centre and also to provide thinking and brain-storming space. The recent addition of the staff kitchen and lunch area has enhanced this.

### **Raising profile in Chancery Lane**

The Centre has achieved a much higher profile than would have been possible by each of its member charities independently, and this is evidenced by activity detailed below. Passers-by on Chancery Lane regularly stop, look into the premises and read the sponsorship board, which has attracted a great deal of attention. The Centre is in contact with the Chancery Lane Association and has made contact with many local firms, chambers and businesses. It is fast becoming an important part of the local legal community.

### **Launch reception report**

The Centre was officially launched on Tuesday 19 October 2010 with a private pre-launch party for sponsors and a larger gathering afterwards at the Royal Courts of Justice. Guests included the Rt Hon Dominic Grieve QC MP, the Attorney General; Jonathan Djanogly MP, Parliamentary Under Secretary of State at the Ministry of Justice; and the Rt Hon The Lord Judge, the Lord Chief Justice.

The Attorney General, Dominic Grieve, QC MP said: "I'm very pleased to be invited to mark the opening of the National Pro Bono Centre and I'm impressed by the professionalism and dedication shown by all involved in making this centre happen. I am sure it will be a place where professionals will share their ideas, experiences and their projects. The work done in the name of pro bono is indispensable. It makes a real difference to people who need legal help but cannot afford to pay for it. I congratulate everyone who helped make this centre possible. May it be a great success."

The main event at the Royal Courts of Justice included performances by some of the community groups assisted by pro bono legal help (photos overleaf). There was a jubilant atmosphere and many people remarked on the momentum provided by the new Centre and the calibre of individuals and businesses involved, including the sponsors.

## **Sponsorship raised**

The fit out of the Centre would not have been possible without our generous sponsors.

**Diamond Sponsor:** FTI Consulting

**Platinum Sponsors:** Anonymous  
Linklaters  
Slaughter and May

**Gold Sponsors:** Allen & Overy  
CMS Cameron McKenna  
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3-4 South Square  
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The Centre also gratefully acknowledges the generous support of the Access to Justice Foundation, Anderson McKenzie Consulting Ltd, CB Richard Ellis, CLO Programme, Commercial Litigators Forum, Denton Associates, Function, GC100, Institute of Paralegals, and Macfarlanes.

The Centre also wishes to express its thanks to the Bar Council, ILEX and the Law Society for their ongoing support.

## **Additional charities coming into the Centre**

Expressions of interest in using hot desks have been received from several organisations. In order to create consistency in the application process, trustees of the Centre met in January to discuss appropriate criteria for allocating desks. Applications are considered by the Centre trustees every six months.

The **Access to Justice Foundation** was the first charity to occupy a hot desk at the Centre, starting in March. The Foundation was established a couple of years ago to receive and distribute funds from pro bono cost orders and other national pro bono fundraising schemes.

In August 2011, the Centre was joined by two more charities. **i-Probono** is a non-profit online network connecting organisations in need of legal assistance with lawyers and students who want to use their legal skills for the public good. The network's global outreach enables people to engage in projects from around the world and allows organisations to source assistance across jurisdictions.

The **London Legal Support Trust (LLST)** supports legal advice charities in London and the South East through organising fundraising events and a grant-making programme. The advice agencies assisted make a huge difference to people's lives, reducing debt, poverty and homelessness, and combating discrimination and injustice. The events LLST hold include the London Legal Walk, which in 2011 raised £497,000 through the efforts of over 5,000 lawyers. LLST also work with the agencies to help them become more sustainable and improve their coordination and partnership working.

## **Meetings hosted**

### **Trustee meetings**

The Access to Justice Foundation, the Bar Pro Bono Unit, the Centre, ILEX Pro Bono and LawWorks all now hold trustee meetings at the Centre.

### **ILEX Benevolent Fund**

The charity has used the meeting facilities for trustee meetings and for their AGM.

### **Independent Parental Special Education Advice**

IPSEA used the meeting facilities to host a number of trustee meetings.

### **South West London Law Centres Training**

SWLLC provided a referrals training session for their staff and volunteers at the Centre.

### **PSU training**

The Personal Support Unit provided a full day training session for their volunteers at the Centre.

### **International pro bono roundtable**

The Centre hosted a meeting of international pro bono charities in the autumn, to provide an opportunity for new charities Trustlaw and i-Probono to present their work to other agencies and to hear about relevant activity in the sector.

### **Pre-meetings for Attorney General's Pro Bono Coordinating Committee**

The Centre has facilitated a programme of pre-meetings for the Attorney General's Pro Bono Coordinating Committees, both domestic and international. These allow law firms to be consulted on the agenda in advance of the Committee meeting.

### **Asylum Support Appeals Project**

The Asylum Support Appeals Project used the Centre as an external setting for discussions as part of the organisation's strategy day.

### **National Pro Bono Week**

The organising committee meet on a monthly basis at the Centre to discuss plans for the 2011 week taking place in November.

### **CSR Legal Network**

The network held one of its periodic membership meetings at the Centre in September with over 25 law firm CSR managers in attendance.

### **Mediation for a local charity**

## **Events**

### **Regional round tables 2011**

In 2011, instead of holding a single conference as in previous years, the Centre went mobile with a series of events taking place - the *National Pro Bono Centre Roundtables*, *The Road Forward: Pro Bono in England and Wales*. The sessions brought together key figures in the regions' legal and voluntary sectors, to map current local pro bono activity and identify the scope for new collaboration, projects and support.

Bournemouth, 21st June 2011

Manchester, 27th June 2011

Cardiff, 4th July 2011

Birmingham, 18<sup>th</sup> October 2011

The final session was arranged to take place in London during National Pro Bono Week on 7<sup>th</sup> November. The plenary session will sum up output from the regional events before breaking into different workshops to explore in-depth topics including measuring the impact of pro bono, litigants in person and international pro bono.

### **Attorney General visit**

On November 3 2011, the Centre was delighted to host the Attorney General at a visit enabling him to learn more about the pro bono sector at work.

### **IT Training June 2011**

The Centre users received free IT training on Microsoft programmes.

### **Legal Aid Debate 2011**

Following on from the success of LawWorks' 2010 debate "Legal Aid after the Election", on 17th March the National Pro Bono Centre hosted to a capacity audience the Question Time Debate "Legal Aid after the Election – One Year On". The high-profile panel, chaired by

Joshua Rozenberg, comprised Lord Bach (Shadow Justice Secretary), Diane Burleigh (ILEX Chief Executive), Jonathan Djanogly MP (Parliamentary Under-Secretary for Justice), Desmond Hudson (Law Society Chief Executive) and Peter Lodder QC (Chairman of the Bar Council).

### **Walk the Thames 2011**

On a damp February weekend, the National Pro Bono Centre fielded a team to take part in the 40 mile walk along the banks of the Thames. Led by the Rt. Hon. the Lord Phillips of Worth Matravers in 2011, the walk is now an annual fixture helping to raise funds for legal advice charities.

### **December 2010 – difficult caller training**

The Director of the Personal Support Unit provided a joint training session for members of the Centre, alongside FRU, to help improve the service the charities are able to offer those who approach the charities for assistance. The Bar Pro Bono Unit has since been asked to provide similar training to a leading London set of chambers.

### **National Pro Bono Centre open day held during National Pro Bono Week**

To help celebrate National Pro Bono Week and raise awareness of the Centre, an open day was held on 9th November 2010. Invitations were sent across the profession, inviting them to drop in for a tour of the premises and a chat over coffee and biscuits. Doors opened from 8am and an encouraging number of people attended. Building on the success of this event, another was arranged for 8<sup>th</sup> November in the following National Pro Bono Week, 2011.

### **October 2010 – joint training day**

Where possible the pro bono charities coordinate training days to help share skills across the different organisations. Attendees included the Bar Pro Bono Unit, LawWorks, ILEX Pro Bono, FRU, the Personal Support Unit and the Royal Courts of Justice CAB. The session explored areas of synergy and opportunities for sharing resources going forward.

### **September 2010 Manchester Legal Walk**

A team of four from the Centre joined local members of the profession in a 10km walk around the City to help raise money for North West Legal Support Trust.

### **Networking event in Bristol**

In late September 2010, St John's Chambers in Bristol hosted an event titled "The New National Pro Bono Centre, What it can do for you". The development of the Centre was outlined together with opportunities for engaging with the coordinating bodies within the Centre.

## **Public profile and voice**

### **Film**

In return for the provision of space for a few weeks in 2011, a small film editing crew, often commissioned by the BBC, produced a short film for the Centre with footage from the London Legal Walk and interviews with staff, clients and lawyers who work with us. The results have been well received and can be viewed on the Centre, LawWorks and Bar Pro Bono Unit websites.

### **Press coverage**

The Centre launch in 2010 was covered or referred to in the Times, Gazette, familylaw.co.uk (Jordan Publishing), AJTC News, Local Government Lawyer, Counsel Magazine and Lawyer 2B. The Legal Aid Debate was covered by Francis Gibb of The Times and some delegates live on Twitter.

### **The National Pro Bono Centre was invited to give evidence to Justice Select Committee on Ministry of Justice proposals for legal aid reform**

The Centre was invited to give evidence to the Justice Select Committee on the MoJ Green Paper, and Paul Newdick, Centre trustee, attended as a witness at the House of Commons, alongside the CEOs of the Law Centres Federation and Citizens Advice.

### **Meeting with BBC following launch**

The Centre was put in contact with the BBC following the launch and have been exploring a documentary based around free legal advice clinics.

### **Discussions with Channel 4 re documentary**

The Centre was contacted by a production company producing a one-hour programme for Channel 4.

## **Legal Aid Reform**

The establishment of the Centre has come at a crucial time when the pro bono movement has needed to work in effective collaboration to consider the sweeping changes to legal aid contained in the Legal Aid, Sentencing and Punishment of Offenders Bill.- notably in relation to the areas of social welfare law. After the Centre gave evidence to the Justice Select Committee and held the Legal Aid Question Time Debate (see above for both), a legal aid modelling workshop was held, to identify the most effective strategies to provide pro bono legal services in the event of the legislation being passed. This is a vital and on-going piece of work. The Centre has also been represented and discussed at the Civil Justice Council's Working Group on Access to Justice for Litigants in Person – reporting this autumn.

## **International delegations hosted**

### **Norway**

Representatives from Norway visited the Centre in 2011 to share their experience of a pro bono legal advice project supporting Norwegian drug addicts.

### **Hong Kong**

The Centre received a visit from the Hong Kong SAR Government in January 2011. The Royal Courts of Justice CAB were hosting a three day visit from the delegation whose main purpose was to enrich their understanding and exposure regarding the various aspects of provision of free legal assistance to litigants in person.

- Ms. Grace Lui, JP, Deputy Secretary for Home Affairs
- Master Andy Ho, Deputy Registrar, High Court
- Ms. Julianna Chan, Assistant Director of Legal Aid

- Mr. Percy Leung, Assistant Secretary for Home Affairs
- Ms. Pauline Lo, Assistant Secretary for Home Affairs

### **Australia**

John Corker, Director of the Australian National Pro Bono Resource Centre, visited in November 2010 to meet with heads of the national clearing houses to discuss key issues affecting both countries.

### **Chile**

Nicolás Allamand Aldunate of Fundación Pro Bono also visited in November 2010 to hear about pro bono work, how the Centre operates, and share thoughts on the issues and challenges facing lawyers assisting in pro bono cases in Latin America.

### **USA**

LawWorks hosted a group of visiting students undertaking a supplementary legal summer school organised by South Western University and University College London. We presented to them on the student pro bono experience in the UK and heard about their experiences in the US.

### **Croatia**

LawWorks organised a full day of activities for students and staff from the University of Zagreb covering the pro bono environment in the UK and helping them to build a pro bono service in Zagreb for the local community.

### **Canada**

In March 2011, Jimmy Yan of Access Pro Bono in March visited the Centre, allowing LawWorks a valuable insight into the work of a remarkably similar organisation.

### **Brussels**

In July 2011, Tony Venables, Director of the European Citizen Advice Service, visited the Centre to discuss possible synergies around the creation of what is being termed a “European Civil Society House”, with attendant need for pro bono assistance.

## **Human resources**

### **New member of staff**

The Centre hired its first permanent member of staff in April. The Head of Finance manages the finances of the Centre itself, LawWorks and the Bar Pro Bono Unit. This is a very early success in terms of achieving the goal of a resource hub which will be both more cost effective and more strategically efficient than separate staffing solutions. We envisage that the resource may be made available on an ad hoc basis for a fee to charities taking hot-desk space within the Centre.

### **Secretarial assistance to the Centre provided by Linklaters**

Linklaters have generously provided secretarial assistance to the Centre through a rota of volunteers attending Chancery Lane. This has been invaluable for the Centre and has been an enjoyable opportunity for the secretaries.

### **Student intern programme being developed by LawWorks**

LawWorks is running a pilot student intern scheme, which would have been impossible in previous accommodation (due to space restrictions) and has been made considerably easier by virtue of the profile of the Centre. Eight student interns provided support to the charity for one day a week for three months from April to June. This was followed by a graduate intern scheme involving five students working with LawWorks three days a week for six months.

### **Centre governance**

#### **Patrons**

The Centre patrons are Baron Judge, the Lord Chief Justice; Lord Goldsmith of Allerton QC PC and Baroness Scotland of Ashtal QC PC.

#### **Board of trustees**

The Centre trustees are Michael Napier CBE QC (Attorney General's Pro Bono Envoy), Robin Knowles CBE QC (Chairman of the Bar Pro Bono Unit); Paul Newdick CBE (Chairman of LawWorks); Rebecca Wilkie (CEO of the Bar Pro Bono Unit) and Rebecca Hilsenrath (CEO of LawWorks). The board has now held three meetings.

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