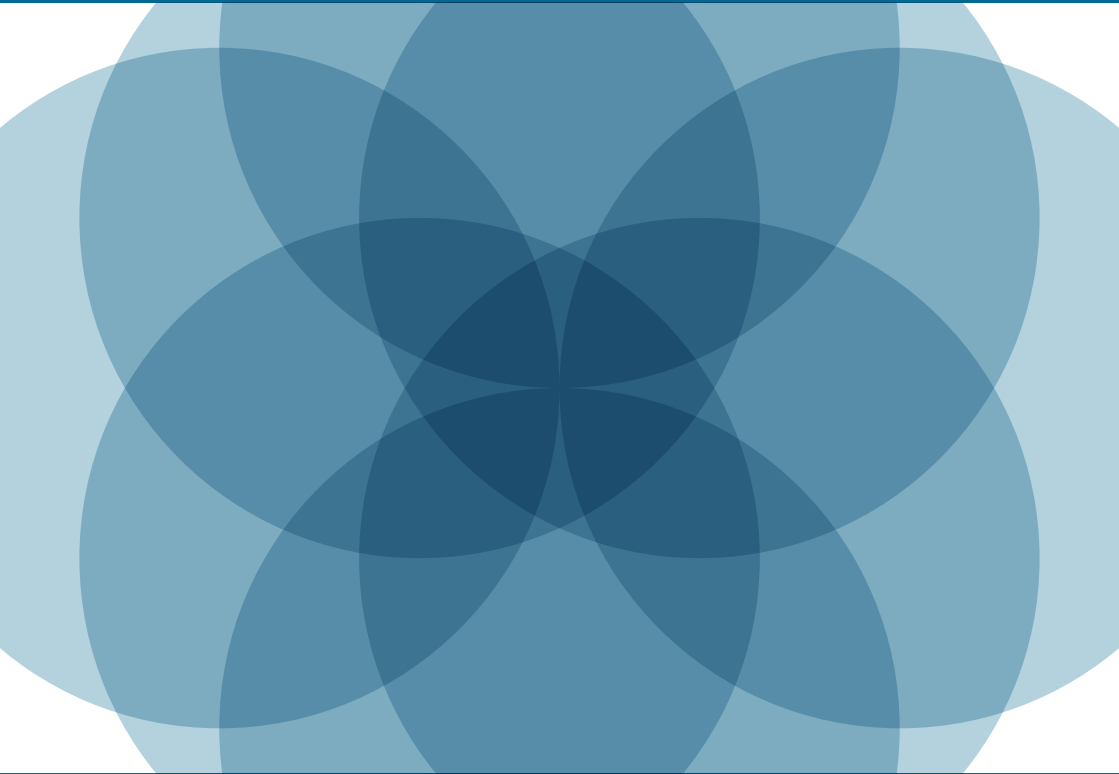


# GUIDE TO PRO BONO

FREE LEGAL ADVICE  
IN ENGLAND & WALES



[www.nationalprobonocentre.org.uk](http://www.nationalprobonocentre.org.uk)  
#WeDoProBono



# Introduction

Solicitors, Barristers and Chartered Legal Executives provide their professional advice for free to those in need to an extent that is unparalleled by any other profession, ensuring that even the most disadvantaged in society can enforce their rights.

Free advice and representation provided by volunteer lawyers is often the only means of obtaining access to justice for people who are unable to pay for legal advice and are not eligible for public funding (legal aid). Many charities and community groups that have very few resources also rely on lawyers who provide legal advice pro bono.

It is important to state that pro bono legal services are not, nor can they ever be, a substitute for a properly funded system of legal aid.

We hope you find the guide useful, and that it informs and inspires you about the work lawyers do locally and internationally to help support those without means to access to justice.



# Contents

Introduction .....	3
Definitions .....	7
Navigating this booklet.....	8
<b>1. For individuals.....</b>	<b>10</b>
Legal Aid.....	12
Law Centres .....	13
Your local MP .....	14
LawWorks.....	15
Independent Parental Special Education Advice (IPSEA) .....	16
Tax Help for Older People <b>and</b> TaxAid .....	17
Age UK Advice .....	18
Citizens Advice.....	19
Support Through Court.....	20
Shelter .....	21
<b>2. For advisers .....</b>	<b>22</b>
Advice UK .....	24
Advocate .....	25
Free Representation Unit (FRU) .....	26
<b>3. For charities .....</b>	<b>28</b>
Advocates for International Development (A4ID) .....	30
International Senior Lawyers Project-UK (ISLP-UK) .....	31
iProbono .....	32
PILnet .....	33
Pure Leapfrog .....	34
TrustLaw .....	35
<b>4. For lawyers .....</b>	<b>36</b>
How to volunteer .....	38
Here are a few ways that you can get involved: .....	38
How to provide financial support .....	40
<b>Useful links .....</b>	<b>42</b>
<b>Notes .....</b>	<b>43</b>



# Definitions

## Pro Bono

Pro bono comes from the Latin phrase “pro bono publico” which means for the public good. In the legal context it generally means the provision of legal services on a free basis to individuals, charities and community groups who cannot afford to pay for that advice or representation and where public means of funding are not available.

## Legal Aid

Legal aid is the provision of assistance to people otherwise unable to afford legal representation and access to the court system. It is funded by the Government, who also determine who is eligible to access legal aid support. Legal aid is generally provided to individuals through private firms of solicitors and barristers in private practice.

## Client

Someone who uses services provided by a lawyer or another legal professional.

## Barrister

A lawyer regulated by the Bar Standards Board, often specialising in court room representation, drafting pleadings and expert legal opinions.

## Chartered Legal Executive

A lawyer regulated by CILEx.

## Solicitor

A lawyer who has been admitted as a solicitor by the SRA and whose name appears on the roll of solicitors.

# Navigating this booklet

## For individuals

This section is here to support individuals who are looking for pro bono legal support for their own case. If individuals are unable to afford a private lawyer, they should first find out if they are eligible for Legal Aid. If not, they can approach a Law Centre if one exists in their area or contact their local Citizens Advice centre.

## For advisors

This section is here to support advisers who are looking for pro bono legal support for their clients. These services can only be utilised via a referral. Individuals are not able to access the pro bono support of these organisations without a referral from an associated referral body (for example, a Law Centre). Advisors should remember that pro bono work is done voluntarily by lawyers, and the availability of pro bono support varies across the country depending on the availability, expertise and capacity in each area.

## For charities

This section is here to support charities, NGOs and Community groups who are in need of legal advice. Many lawyers provide pro bono support to charities, NGOs, community groups and social enterprises which need legal assistance and cannot afford to pay for a lawyer. This is often done on an ad hoc basis where a lawyer has a particular relationship with a charity or group.

There are also several organisations which help to “broker” these relationships.



## **For lawyers**

This section is here to support lawyers who are considering doing pro bono work. There are examples of ways in which lawyers can get involved. We again emphasize that pro bono legal services are not, nor can they ever be, a substitute for a properly funded system of legal aid. The professional bodies continue to support lawyers by lobbying on that point.

# 1. For individuals

**This section is here to support individuals who cannot afford a private lawyer but who are not eligible for legal aid**





# Legal Aid



If you need help with paying for legal advice, you may be able to get legal aid. By 'legal aid', we mean publicly funded legal assistance, available through the Legal Aid Agency.

The scope of legal aid has been reduced over the past few years; however, it is still available for certain civil and criminal cases.

## Where do I get help?

Legal aid is dependent on your financial position, the area of law for which you require assistance, and the strength of your case. As the legal aid system is complicated and constantly changing you should always speak to an advisor first.

You can find out more at:

- [www.lawsociety.org.uk/legalaid](http://www.lawsociety.org.uk/legalaid)
- [www.gov.uk/legal-aid](http://www.gov.uk/legal-aid)
- 0845 345 4345

# Law Centres



Law Centres are a network of over forty not-for-profit legal practices. Each Law Centre is an independent charity with a defined service area.

Law Centres help people living in poverty or other disadvantage who cannot afford to pay for traditional commercial legal services. They provide legal advice and representation in social welfare law. Local services and areas of law offered will vary among Law Centres dependent on the funding available and Law Centres offer legal aid where available.

The central contact details for Law Centres are:

- [www.lawcentres.org.uk](http://www.lawcentres.org.uk)
- [info@lawcentres.org.uk](mailto:info@lawcentres.org.uk)

## Your local MP



The majority of MPs have times when they are available at different places within their constituency for constituents to meet and discuss problems with them. These sessions are often called surgeries and details are usually advertised in local papers and on your MP's website. Your MP's secretary will also be able to advise you when your MP will next be holding a surgery.

You can find out how to contact your MP here:

- [www.theyworkforyou.com](http://www.theyworkforyou.com)

LawWorks (the operating name for the Solicitors Pro Bono Group) is a registered national charity which connects people in need of legal advice and assistance, and the not-for-profit organisations that support them, with the skills and expertise of lawyers willing to meet those needs for free.

## Support for clinics

The LawWorks Clinic Network is a nationwide network of free legal advice clinics which LawWorks supports. Clinics provide free advice to individuals on various areas of the law. Advice is delivered face to face, over the phone, and in some cases via Skype and on either a drop in or appointment basis.

To find your local advice clinic please visit the LawWorks website:

- [www.lawworks.org.uk/clinics](http://www.lawworks.org.uk/clinics)

## Secondary specialisation casework

LawWorks team of specialist solicitors train and supervise volunteer lawyers to advise and represent vulnerable clients in specific areas of social welfare law. In collaboration with clinics from our network, Law Centres, advice agencies, charities and local legal aid firms, cases are evaluated, assessing their merits and the client's suitability. Once a referral to LawWorks has been made, eligible clients are matched with volunteer lawyers to deal with the case:

- [www.lawworks.org.uk/secondary-specialisation](http://www.lawworks.org.uk/secondary-specialisation)

## Not-for-profits programme

LawWorks Not-for-Profits Programme brokers legal advice to smaller not-for-profit organisations on a wide range of legal issues, to support the continuation and expansion of their services to people in need:

- [www.lawworks.org.uk/legal-advice-not-profits](http://www.lawworks.org.uk/legal-advice-not-profits)

# Independent Parental Special Education Advice (IPSEA)



# IPSEA

IPSEA is a registered national charity that helps children and young people with special educational needs and disabilities to get the support at school to which they are legally entitled. We run helplines that provide telephone advice to parents and young people and provide support to families going to tribunal.

## Support

Children and young people with all kinds of special educational needs and disabilities who are distressed and disadvantaged because they are not getting the educational support that they are legally entitled to.

## Application route

For further information, please visit the IPSEA website or use the contact details below:

- [www.ipsea.org.uk](http://www.ipsea.org.uk)
- 01799 582 030



# Tax Help for Older People and TaxAid



Tax Help for Older People concentrates on all aspects of tax for those close to 60 or older and those recently bereaved.

TaxAid covers people of working age, including business tax, individuals' tax and tax debt.

## Support

The two charities between them cover all tax matters and each will refer a case to the other where doing so is in the client's interest.

## Not covered

- Tribunal or Court representation.
- Social security benefits.

Permanent responsibilities as a tax agent; we aim to solve our clients' immediate problems and enable them to look after themselves in the future.

## Application route

### Tax Help for Older People

- [www.taxvol.org.uk](http://www.taxvol.org.uk)
- [taxvol@taxvol.org.uk](mailto:taxvol@taxvol.org.uk)
- 0845 601 3321

### TaxAid

- [www.taxaid.org.uk](http://www.taxaid.org.uk)
- 020 7803 4950

Age UK has a vision of a world where older people flourish. Age UK provide advice on a range of issues including health and care, housing, work and learning, money and benefits, wellbeing, home and community.

## Support

- Telephone information and advice service
- Casework and face to face services
- Guides and Factsheets on a wide range of topics.

## Application route

- Telephone our Information & Advice line on 0800 169 6565, open 8am to 7pm every day of the year
- Where we can assist, you will be transferred to a specialist advisor or directed to your local Age UK
- [www.ageuk.org.uk](http://www.ageuk.org.uk)
- 0800 169 8787

Citizens Advice provides advice that is free, independent, confidential and impartial to everyone on their rights and responsibilities. Citizens Advice provide face to face advice from 2,500 local Citizens Advice locations across England and Wales, as well as by phone, web chat, post, email and our self-help website.

Online advice can be found by visiting:

- [www.citizensadvice.org.uk](http://www.citizensadvice.org.uk)

More information about the ways Citizens Advice provide advice including how to find your local Citizens Advice can be found at:

- [www.citizensadvice.org.uk/about-us/how-we-provide-advice](http://www.citizensadvice.org.uk/about-us/how-we-provide-advice)

# Support Through Court



Support Through Court, formerly known as the PSU, helps litigants in person, their friends and families, witnesses, victims and inexperienced court users.

## Support

- Practical and emotional support for people without representation in civil and family proceedings in courts and court offices
- Help with organising papers, completing forms, preparing for court etc.
- Attending court with litigants in person
- Signposting to relevant providers, agencies and online resources.

## Not covered

- Legal advice or representation.

## Application route

- Instant access at offices normally available, as well as appointments in advance by telephone or email.
- See website for contact details for Support Through Court offices in courts:
- [www.supportthroughcourt.org.uk](http://www.supportthroughcourt.org.uk)

Shelter helps people struggling with bad housing or homelessness through our advice, support and legal services.

Support Shelter offers housing advice to anyone. They can help people take action, including if they are:

- living in run-down or overcrowded housing
- homeless, or worried that they soon could be
- having problems with their landlord (private or social) facing eviction or repossession
- having difficulty paying their rent or mortgage
- experiencing problems with neighbours
- unsure of their housing rights
- unsure of the benefits they are entitled to
- having difficulty with debt or bankruptcy.

## Application route

Shelter's free national helpline is open all year round and offers expert housing advice. The website offers housing advice and practical tips online. Individual questions are answered through the email form on the website.

- [www.shelter.org.uk/advice](http://www.shelter.org.uk/advice)
- 0344 515 2000

# 2. For advisers

This section here is to support advisers  
who are looking for pro bono legal  
support for their clients



AdviceUK is the umbrella body for 800 independent community advice organisations across England, Scotland and Wales.

AdviceUK members are diverse and serve populations groups across the spectrum. Over 250 have a BMER focus and many other members work with disabled people, migrants, women, young people, older people or specific groups such as housing association tenants or students.

Please note Advice UK does not offer advice, or deal with members of the public and only provides support to advice agencies.

## Support to AdviceUK members

- Organisational development and funding support
- Learning and skills (staff development)
- Insurances
- Influencing and policy voice.

## Application route

- [www.adviceuk.org.uk](http://www.adviceuk.org.uk)
- [mail@adviceuk.org.uk](mailto:mail@adviceuk.org.uk)



## Advocate

Advocate (the new name for the Bar Pro Bono Unit) provides barristers across England and Wales for people who are not eligible for legal aid and who cannot afford to pay. Cases are matched to qualified barristers from Advocate's panel.

### Support

- Specialist legal advice, drafting and representation
- Help at mediation
- All areas of law, and all courts & tribunals
- Chartered Legal Executives to support barristers acting pro bono.

### Application route

- Individuals must be referred from a MP, lawyer, or advice agency using application form available online
- Applications must be submitted at least 3 weeks before help is needed
- Applications from charities, community groups, companies and other organisations can apply via the application form available on the website.
- [www.weareadvocate.org.uk](http://www.weareadvocate.org.uk)
- 020 7092 3960

# Free Representation Unit (FRU)



FRU represents clients in social security and employment tribunals. The cases are run by volunteers, who are mostly law students, and are overseen by FRU's staff.

## Support

Representation in tribunals and pre-hearing settlement negotiations in:

- Employment
- Social security benefits
- Criminal injuries compensation.

## Not covered

- Cases without a hearing date
- Tribunal venues outside London and the South East or Nottingham and the surrounding area.

## Application route

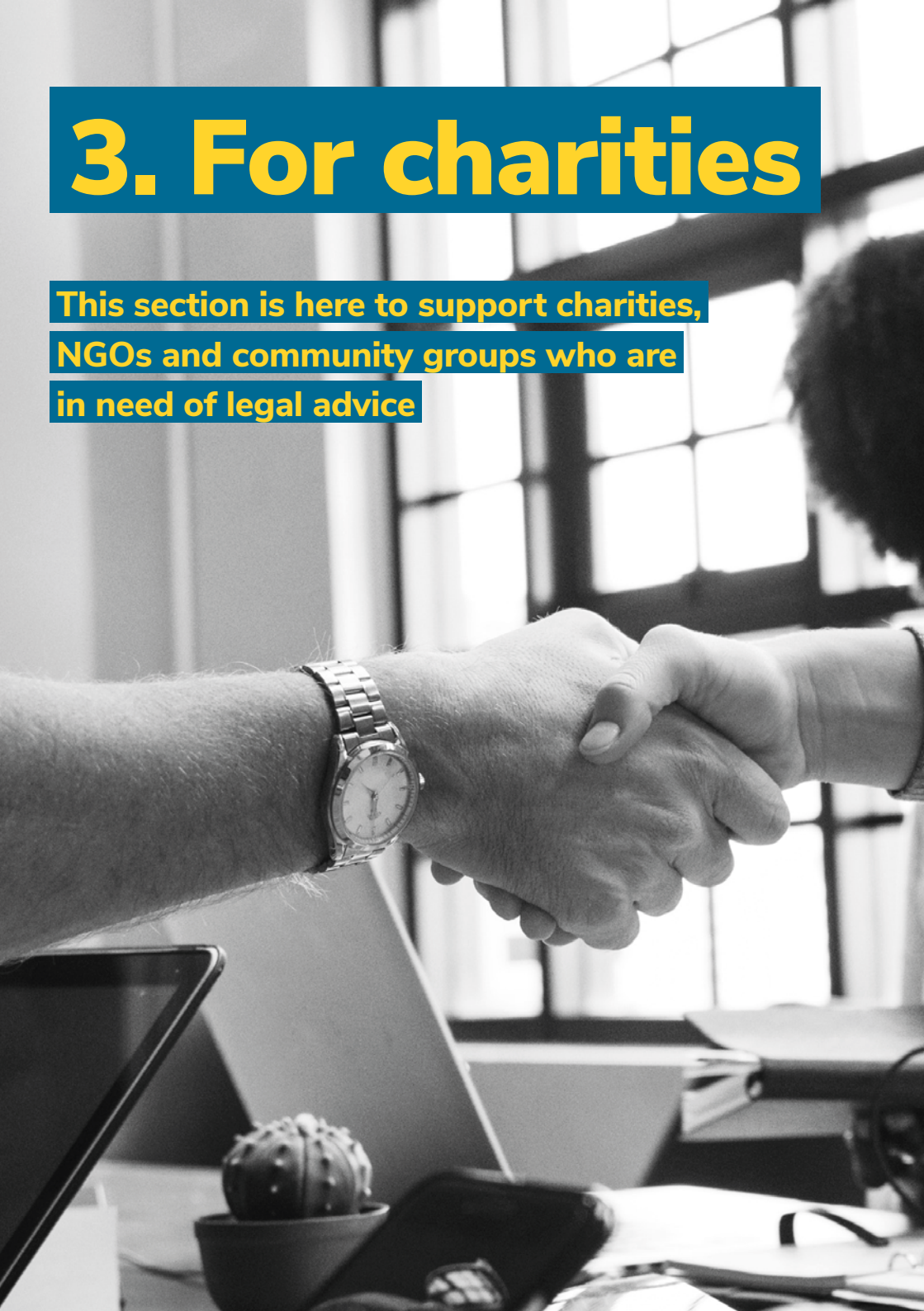
Most cases have to be referred from one of the partner agencies. Short employment tribunal hearings (final hearings lasting no more than 2 days) may be referred directly by claimants using the self-referral scheme, which is explained fully on our website.

- [www.thefru.org.uk](http://www.thefru.org.uk)
- 020 7611 9555



# 3. For charities

**This section is here to support charities,  
NGOs and community groups who are  
in need of legal advice**







# Advocates for International Development (A4ID)



A4ID is a leading, global, charity that believes the law can, and should, be used more effectively to eradicate global poverty and advance fair and sustainable development.

Through A4ID's pro bono broker service, the world's top lawyers offer free legal support to organisations working to advance human dignity, equality and justice. A4ID also operates as a knowledge and resource hub with a range of training courses, publications and events exploring the role of law in sustainable development. In addition, A4ID manages the ROLE UK programme, a unique collaboration between the UK government, judiciary and lawyers to strengthen the rule of law in developing countries.

For over ten years, A4ID's work has inspired and enabled lawyers and development organisations to use the law as an effective development tool. A4ID's network includes over **50,000 lawyers** and more than **800 development partners**, for whom the organisation has facilitated pro bono projects in 130 countries.

## A4ID's key services

- Enables lawyers to align their pro bono work to the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)
- Provides training and expertise for NGOs and development organisations on how to harness the law to advance their work
- Facilitates high quality, pro bono, legal advice for NGOs, charities, governments and social enterprises
- Contributes to policy discussions on law and the SDGs and Business and Human Rights

## Partner with us

- [www.a4id.org](http://www.a4id.org)
- [probono@a4id.org](mailto:probono@a4id.org)
- Twitter: [@a4id](https://twitter.com/a4id)
- 020 3559 6244

# International Senior Lawyers Project-UK (ISLP-UK)



ISLP-UK fosters just and accountable development that is sustainable, supportive of human rights, and strengthens the rule of law.

Their unique network of highly skilled and experienced pro bono lawyers advise civil society and governments in less developed countries.

ISLP-UK's work in around 80 countries focuses on:

- more equitable & inclusive economic growth
- better governance of state resources
- more responsible and sustainable corporate investment
- increased transparency and access to information
- greater community participation in development decisions
- improved protections for civil society space & freedom of expression.

## Application route

- [info-uk@islp.org](mailto:info-uk@islp.org)
- [www.islp.org](http://www.islp.org)

iProbono strengthens civil society, represents people in need and advocates for equal justice.

iProbono works with organisations to diagnose their requirements, the needs of their beneficiaries, scope out projects and bring together a team of people to accelerate their mission.

## **Support**

iProbono work with civil society organisations, social enterprises and people in need.

## **Not covered**

Unfortunately, iProbono cannot take on private matters for members of the public unless referred through a partner organisation.

## **Application route**

- [www.i-probono.com](http://www.i-probono.com)
- [contact@i-probono.com](mailto:contact@i-probono.com)



PILnet helps charities and NGOs to access free legal assistance. From six offices around the world, we act as a matchmaker between NGOs that need legal help and expert lawyers that are willing to volunteer their time and skills.

## Support

- Charities, NGOs, non-for-profit organisations, social enterprises and community groups
- Local and international legal research, advice, training and representation
- All areas of law including employment, contracts, tax, human rights, equality and public law.

## Not covered

- Individual clients.

## Application route

All new NGO partners seeking pro bono support undergo an initial screening process followed by a consultation about their pro bono needs.

- [www.pilnet.org](http://www.pilnet.org)
- [globalprobono@pilnet.org](mailto:globalprobono@pilnet.org)

Pure Leapfrog provides social investment and professional support to community energy projects in the UK. Their mission is to give all UK communities the opportunity to own and generate clean, green power and work together to reduce energy demand by making finance accessible and affordable.

Pure Leapfrog introduce community energy groups to high value affordable professional expertise, provided through their network of lawyers, accountants and other professional service providers.

## Support

- Affordable finance for UK based community energy projects.
- UK based carbon reduction projects.
- Multi-disciplinary professional advice: legal, accountancy, business communications, environmental engineering and consultancy.

## Application route:

By email. Full details of eligibility criteria on their website.

- [www.pureleapfrog.org](http://www.pureleapfrog.org)
- [info@pureleapfrog.org](mailto:info@pureleapfrog.org)

TrustLaw is the Thomson Reuters Foundation's global pro bono legal programme. They connect lawyers around the world with NGOs and social enterprises, to provide free legal assistance to help organisations scale their impact and operate more effectively.

NGOs, social enterprises, law firms and in-house corporate legal teams can become members of TrustLaw.

## Support

Members of TrustLaw can submit requests for pro bono legal assistance. TrustLaw will connect them with law firms who can provide legal research; drafting of employment and volunteer agreements; corporate structuring advice; partnership or funding agreements; and intellectual property support.

## Application route

Social enterprises, NGOs, and law firms can submit membership applications via [www.apply.trust.org](http://www.apply.trust.org)

- [www.trust.org/trustlaw](http://www.trust.org/trustlaw)
- [trustlaw@thomsonreuters.com](mailto:trustlaw@thomsonreuters.com)

# 4. For lawyers

This section is here lawyers who  
are considering doing or supporting  
pro bono work





# How to volunteer

Here are a few ways that you can get involved:

## Volunteer at a Citizens Advice or Law Centre

Citizens Advice and Law Centres rely on pro bono volunteers to support the work of paid staff.

- [www.citizensadvice.org.uk/about-us/support-us/volunteering](http://www.citizensadvice.org.uk/about-us/support-us/volunteering)
- [www.lawcentres.org.uk/lcn-s-work/volunteer-with-us](http://www.lawcentres.org.uk/lcn-s-work/volunteer-with-us)

## For solicitors:

Find out if your firm has a pro bono programme. If not, set one up! The Law Society has a number of tools to help law firms and in-house teams plan, develop or maintain a pro bono programme. For further information, please see the Law Society's Pro Bono Manual and/or Developing a Pro Bono Programme: Guidance and Toolkit. Firms and in-house teams can also become signatories to the Law Society's Pro Bono Charter. The Charter is a public commitment by the legal community to promote pro bono opportunities throughout their businesses and shows support for access to justice. Finally, firms and in-house teams can also become members of Law Works (the Solicitor's Pro Bono Group) and have access to a range of volunteering opportunities.

## For barristers:

Please register to volunteer with Advocate as without the Bar's support it quite simply could not exist. There are cases in all areas of law suitable for second-six pupils up to silks. Whether it is advice, drafting or representation, your assistance will be invaluable to their applicants.

## Connecting barristers and solicitors:

If you are a barrister doing a pro bono case and want the assistance of a solicitor, or you are a solicitor and want the assistance of a barrister, the Pro Bono Connect scheme can help. Our vision is that joint barrister and solicitor assistance should always be available for pro bono cases, if needed. We have established a network of around 50 chambers and law firms willing to collaborate on pro bono cases and a simple framework to enable them to do so. We do not initiate new cases but facilitate cross profession collaboration on existing cases. This leads to greater efficiency, less pressure on individual lawyers, a better service for the client and an increase in pro bono work overall.

To find out more, visit:

- [www.probonoconnect.co.uk](http://www.probonoconnect.co.uk), or
- [contact.admin@probonoconnect.co.uk](mailto:contact.admin@probonoconnect.co.uk).

## For chartered legal executives:

CILEx members can get involved in pro bono work even if their firm does not have a pro bono programme. CILEx members should visit the CILEx Pro Bono Trust's website where pro bono volunteering opportunities are highlighted alongside information on CILEx specific pro bono projects. Practising solicitors, barristers and CILEx members can all volunteer with FRU. Lawyers with appropriate experience can have some or all of the training requirement waived.

For a portal with standing and ad-hoc volunteering opportunities visit:

- [www.nationalprobonocentre.org.uk/volunteer-portal/](http://www.nationalprobonocentre.org.uk/volunteer-portal/)

# How to provide financial support

Pro bono initiatives are not just dependent on the generosity of lawyers giving their time, but also on financial contributions. Some key ways to provide financial support are listed below.

## 1. Individual donations

Donations can be made independently or via a giving scheme. Since 2013 the Bar Council has enabled barristers renewing their practising certificates to donate £30 to Advocate as the pro bono charity of the Bar.

## 2. Corporate schemes

Corporations can become part of a pro bono membership and law firms can donate directly from their charitable foundation. The “Friends in Law” scheme recognises chambers that donate to Advocate and FRU.

## 3. Events

The Legal Support Trusts, a network of seven charities covering England and Wales, organises fundraising events such as the legal walks. Other fundraising opportunities include the Great Legal Bake and the Great Legal Quiz.

## 4. Pro bono costs

Pro bono costs are awarded in the same ways as ordinary costs but where the client received free legal representation. These funds are distributed strategically via the Access to Justice Foundation to support further pro bono help.



## 5. Dormant client account monies

Unclaimed client account balances can be donated to charity. The Access to Justice Foundation runs a scheme to encourage law firms to donate these sums to support pro bono and provides indemnity for donations over £500 as required by the SRA.

For more information please [visit \*\*www.atjf.org.uk\*\*](http://www.atjf.org.uk)

# Useful links

AdviceUK [www.adviceuk.org.uk](http://www.adviceuk.org.uk)

Advocates for International Development [www.a4id.org](http://www.a4id.org)

AgeUK [www.ageuk.org.uk](http://www.ageuk.org.uk)

Advocate [www.weareadvocate.org.uk](http://www.weareadvocate.org.uk)

CILEx Pro Bono Trust [www.cilexpbt.org.uk](http://www.cilexpbt.org.uk)

Citizens Advice [www.citizensadvice.org.uk](http://www.citizensadvice.org.uk)

Free Representation Unit [www.thefru.org.uk](http://www.thefru.org.uk)

i-Probono [www.i-probono.com](http://www.i-probono.com)

IPSEA [www.ipsea.org.uk](http://www.ipsea.org.uk)

International Senior Lawyers Project [www.islp.org](http://www.islp.org)

Law Centres Network [www.lawcentres.org.uk](http://www.lawcentres.org.uk)

LawWorks [www.lawworks.org.uk](http://www.lawworks.org.uk)

Legal Aid [www.gov.uk/civil-legal-advice](http://www.gov.uk/civil-legal-advice)

MPs [www.theyworkforyou.com](http://www.theyworkforyou.com)

National Pro Bono Centre [www.nationalprobonocentre.org.uk](http://www.nationalprobonocentre.org.uk)

Support Through Court [www.supportthroughcourt.org](http://www.supportthroughcourt.org)

PILnet [www.pilnet.org](http://www.pilnet.org)

PureLeapfrog [www.pureleapfrog.org](http://www.pureleapfrog.org)

Shelter [www.shelter.org.uk](http://www.shelter.org.uk)

Tax [www.taxaid.org.uk](http://www.taxaid.org.uk)

Tax Help for Older People [www.taxvol.org.uk](http://www.taxvol.org.uk)

TrustLaw [www.trust.org/trustlaw](http://www.trust.org/trustlaw)

## Notes

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**Pro bono it's part of being a lawyer**  
**#WeDoProBono**

More information:  
[www.nationalprobonocentre.org.uk](http://www.nationalprobonocentre.org.uk)

**PRO  
BONO  
WEEK**  
[probonoweb.org.uk](http://probonoweb.org.uk)

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