



The Law Society

www.lawsociety.org.uk

The Law Society
of England & Wales

The Pro Bono Charter

The Pro Bono Charter is a Statement of Commitment that firms, ABS and in-house teams are invited to sign up to. It is a great opportunity to highlight your law firm or organisation's pro bono work.

PRO BONO CHARTER STATEMENT

Pro bono – which is the provision of free legal advice for the public good, has been carried out by lawyers for many generations.

By signing the Statement of Commitment, your law firm or organisation is demonstrating its commitment to improving access to justice for those individuals and organisations who have legal needs and are ineligible for legal aid and unable to afford to pay for legal services.

The Pro Bono Charter is a public commitment by the legal community to promote pro bono opportunities throughout their businesses and to help support this goal. However, pro bono work is always only an adjunct to, and not a substitute for, a proper system of publicly funded legal services.





WHAT IS IN IT FOR ME?

Once signed up, your law firm or organisation will be able to access the Law Society's best practice guidance, case studies and mini guides. In addition, your law firm or organisation will be entitled to a three month trial membership with LawWorks, the Solicitors Pro Bono Group, which is funded by the Law Society. This trial membership includes access to the LawWorks quarterly Pro Bono Forum, newsletters and online resources as well as any training delivered by LawWorks during the trial period. Signatories are also asked to participate in a biennial reporting process to demonstrate their commitment to providing pro bono advice.

The Law Society will also provide direct support via four forums a year and a regular newsletter, containing updates from the pro bono sector about best practice and innovation.

All signatories to the Statement of Commitment are eligible for nomination for the Law Society's annual Pro Bono Excellence Award. Further information on the Award can be found here: www.lawsociety.org.uk/support-services/events-training/excellence-awards/



HOW DO I SIGN UP?

Signing up to the Pro Bono Charter is easy and available online. A pro bono manager, partner or director will need to visit www.lawsociety.org.uk/support-services/practice-management/pro-bono/pro-bono-charter/ where you will need to provide the following information:

- the full name and title of a partner or director
- the full name of your law firm or organisation
- the law firm's SRA number or partner/director's SRA number (optional)
- an operational contact name, email address and telephone number.

SUMMARY

Pro Bono Charter signatories will:

- have access to additional tools and information
- be invited to attend four Law Society pro bono forums per year
- receive regular Law Society newsletters
- be included in case studies in the biennial report
- be eligible for nomination for the Law Society's Pro Bono Excellence Award
- have the opportunity to lead and shape the pro bono agenda by providing biennial data about their pro bono work
- be eligible for a three month trial membership with LawWorks, including access to their online information and resources
- demonstrate they have or are developing a pro bono policy
- have identified a person or committee responsible for pro bono work.

Please see the next page for a copy of the Pro Bono Charter which your firm may wish to display in your office so that all of your employees and clients will know you have endorsed the Pro Bono Charter.



THE PRO BONO CHARTER

Firm name:

Signatory name:

Job title:

OUR STATEMENT OF COMMITMENT TO THE PRO BONO CHARTER

We believe that a commitment to access to justice is at the heart of the legal profession and that pro bono work, as one method of achieving this, is an integral part of the working lives of solicitors.

Pro bono legal work is always only an adjunct to, and not a substitute for, a proper system of publicly funded legal services. Pro bono acts as an adjunct to state funded services, which provides an exceptionally important contribution to society, helping many vulnerable people, families on lower incomes, charities and international communities, whose legal needs would otherwise be left unmet.

We recognise that at all stages throughout their career, solicitors have the capacity to use their professional expertise to help those with legal needs and we will strive to encourage a commitment to pro bono throughout the solicitor profession.

Accordingly, we will:

- Strive to achieve best practice in our pro bono work, for individuals and organisations, who require legal advice in order to access justice but who cannot afford it.
- Support the development of best practice in pro bono by collecting and sharing examples of practical activities that contribute to an increase in the effectiveness of pro bono delivery and result in more solicitors getting involved in such work and signing this Statement of Commitment.
- Take responsibility for meeting our Pro Bono Charter commitments.
- Work together to develop and adopt future protocols and best practice guidance that support the practical implementation of the aims of this Pro Bono Charter.
- Contribute our data to a joint biennial report based on a monitoring exercise to measure the impact of this Pro Bono Charter and its protocols in improving best pro bono practice and increasing the amount of pro bono delivery.

As a minimum sign of commitment to pro bono, we agree that we have (or are developing):

1. A pro bono policy
2. An identified person or committee responsible for pro bono work
3. Endorsed the Joint Pro Bono Protocol

Signature:



DEFINITION OF PRO BONO

The Joint Pro Bono Protocol for the provision of free legal advice, was developed to promote and support consistently high standards of pro bono work and compliments the Pro Bono Charter.

The Joint Pro Bono Protocol can be found here: www.lawsociety.org.uk/support-services/practice-management/pro-bono/the-pro-bono-protocol/

All signatories of the Pro Bono Charter thereby endorse the Joint Pro Bono protocol.

PRO BONO RECOMMENDATIONS

Law Society Pro Bono recommendations are supported by best practice guidance, case studies and toolkits. These materials provide Pro Bono Charter signatories with examples of best pro bono practices, as well as advice on where to get more help or information.

Law Society Pro Bono recommendations and best practice guidance are available to all signatories of the Pro Bono Charter and will be continuously developed to reflect best practice of new ideas.

The Law Society

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www.lawsociety.org.uk

www.lawsociety.org.uk/support-services/practice-management/pro-bono/

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#WeDoProBono

BIENNIAL REPORT

Signatories to the Pro Bono Charter commit to provide information which will be included in a biennial report. The report will measure progress against the commitments in the Pro Bono Charter.

Input will be provided online through an easy to use self-assessment exercise to record progress and performance. Results will be published in aggregate by the Law Society and used to identify trends, successes and areas for improvement.

Where examples of good practice by Pro Bono Charter signatories is identified, and with the signatories consent, the Law Society will be happy to promote it. All case studies will be cleared and text agreed with signatories before publication.

The Law Society's reporting mechanism is in development and will be launched in 2017 after consultation with Pro Bono Charter signatories. All signatories will have the opportunity to feed into the development of the reporting mechanism.

