



# PRO BONO IN CHAMBERS

A GUIDE FOR  
AND BY CHAMBERS STAFF

Prepared in partnership by the IBC, the LPMA and Advocate

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# INTRODUCTION

Thank you very much for considering how to make pro bono a part of your chambers' practice. Pro bono is legal help provided voluntarily by the profession to individuals or charities who cannot afford to pay but are not eligible for legal aid.

With a little thought and preparation, pro bono can easily be slotted in beside fee-paying work and can enhance the careers and practice of those who take part. It also makes a huge difference to the lives of pro bono clients who would otherwise have to navigate the legal system alone.

In this document, you will find information about why pro bono is important, the benefits it can bring, and how to support pro bono within chambers. Whilst it is ultimately a decision for self-employed barristers as to whether they wish to take on unpaid work, there are some simple steps that can be taken by chambers to support members who wish to do pro bono work.

Not everything in the document will be applicable to all barristers. Equally, it's not expected that every chambers will take up all the suggestions in this guide, which could be implemented over time. Finally, if there are strategies that have worked in your set or ideas that we have not covered, please let us know so that we can update this document for the future.

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# WHY PRO BONO IS IMPORTANT

Many barristers and chambers staff see pro bono as important in itself, as part of their commitment to access to justice. It is not only personally rewarding but has many benefits.

## FOR JUNIORS

Pro bono provides additional experience and opportunities, in particular for advocacy. It can be in any area of law (e.g. through Advocate) and in specific courts (e.g. CLIPS).

Junior barristers have the opportunity to receive mentoring on pro bono cases, or to work alongside more senior counsel in [Advocate's Collaborate mentoring scheme](#). It can also provide an opportunity to lead other juniors for the first time.

## FOR SENIORS

Pro bono provides opportunities to expand into new areas of practice, and to develop existing specialisms (e.g. with reported cases).

It can provide an opportunity to [lead junior members](#).

# PRACTICE DEVELOPMENT

1. Pro bono work can be used to support applications to panels (e.g. AG, EHRC) and to strengthen silk applications.

Pro bono can be used as evidence of (a) reported cases; (b) equality and diversity competences; (c) inter-personal and communication skills; and (d) judicial referees.

2. It can provide additional recent cases for submissions to legal directories.

Charities may also be able to provide written evidence to support nominations/submissions for industry awards made on behalf of chambers.

3. Pro bono work can lead to barristers making new professional connections by working with solicitors on a pro bono case (e.g. Pro Bono Connect), and conversely can lead to work from solicitors on the opposing side.

4. Being a case reviewer for Advocate has been used to support judicial applications.

5. A public commitment to pro bono aligns with solicitor, in-house and client aspirations, who increasingly want not just excellent counsel but those who support their Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) and Environment, Social, Governance (ESG) goals.

6. As set out above, many of those who come into the law do so out of a sense of wanting to help others. Prospective pupils may choose your set (or reject it) on the basis of your ethical commitments including the amount of pro bono work undertaken. The satisfaction of volunteering whilst getting different/interesting work is good for the wellbeing and retention of barristers.

## WAYS PRO BONO BENEFITS THE CLERK/PRACTICE MANAGER:

It is not only barristers who benefit from pro bono work. Staff, particularly Practice Managers/Clerks often do too for the following reasons:

1. It provides a way to proactively bring in work opportunities for your barristers.
2. It provides excellent opportunities for being introduced to new solicitors in the litigation context (rather than through marketing) e.g. through Pro Bono Connect.
3. Pro bono cases provide something to talk about when networking or marketing (whether in person or on social media/LinkedIn), particularly where the client has a CSR/ESG commitment where you can demonstrate shared values.
4. It helps you to actively develop your barristers' practices over the longer term (and provides experience to junior clerks of doing this).
5. As with barristers, it can provide an immense amount of work satisfaction and career development, which helps with retention.
6. Clerks and practice managers have won awards for facilitating pro bono work.

# WORKING WITH PRO BONO ORGANISATIONS

Pro bono can be undertaken in a variety of ways. This can be reasonably informal, the odd piece of work for a solicitor client who has a client who cannot pay, for example, or where legal aid is refused but the client does not have funds. Additionally, you can work with the profession's pro bono organisations and schemes, which include:

CLICK ON THE LINKS BELOW TO FIND OUT MORE ABOUT THE BAR'S SCHEMES:

- [ADVOCATE](#)
- [PRO BONO CONNECT](#)
- [CLIPS](#)
- [COIN](#)
- [ELAAS](#)
- [ELIPS](#)
- [FREE REPRESENTATION UNIT](#)

FOR OTHER SCHEMES,  
VISIT [ADVOCATE'S WEBSTIE](#)

# HOW TO SUPPORT PRO BONO IN YOUR CHAMBERS

THE FOLLOWING ARE SOME SUGGESTED WAYS FOR HOW YOU CAN INCORPORATE A PRO BONO ETHOS IN CHAMBERS.

## 1. SIGN UP

- Appoint a clerk/staff member as [Pro Bono Champion](#) to help lead promotion and coordination in your set (in addition to a barrister).
- They can also sign up to receive requests from solicitors through [Pro Bono Connect](#).
- Sign up to the [Chambers Pro Bono Framework](#). The Framework sets out four actions for chambers to complete over a calendar year to help embed pro bono within chambers infrastructure. Participating chambers will be publicly highlighted and will receive additional resources from Advocate to help complete the actions, all of which are set out in this guide.
- Ask barristers to commit 25 pro bono hours as part of Advocate's [Pro Bono Pledge](#).

## 2. SUPPORT AND ENCOURAGE YOUR BARRISTERS

- Clerks can keep an eye out for cases of interest in the emails from Advocate and Pro Bono Connect (which can be tailored to practice areas), in order to actively suggest cases to particular barristers. Also, regularly circulate the email from Advocate to your barrister team/chambers.
- Encourage pupil supervisors to take on a pro bono case for their pupil to gain experience. In their second six, encourage pupils to take on a case through FRU or Advocate (which specifies cases by seniority).
- In meetings with new tenants (or joining letters) encourage them to take on a pro bono case in their first year(s) to get further experience (this is mandatory in some sets).
- Include pro bono in practice development meetings with your members. Discuss how pro bono could support their longer-term goals e.g. through advocacy, new areas of law, raising their profile. Ask about personal causes/charities they might wish to support.
- Organise a seminar internally in chambers to explain the practicalities of how pro bono can be undertaken and the business benefits, or include pro bono within other internal seminars e.g. “top tips to develop your practice”. A full [seminar guide](#) and presentation script is available.



### 3. **MARKETING**

- On chambers' website and individual barrister pages, include your commitment to pro bono (including relevant logos), together with other CSR/ESG.
- In legal directories submissions, highlight your chambers' pro bono involvement.
- Retweet posts about pro bono referring to your barristers/chambers. Post on chambers' Twitter and LinkedIn when chambers/barristers undertake pro bono, join the [Pro Bono Pledge](#) or wins an award. Use the hashtag #WeDoProBono.
- Nominate your barristers (and staff) for the [Bar Pro Bono Awards](#) (deadline will be posted on the Advocate Twitter).
- On email footers, add logos for the Pro Bono Pledge and any pro bono awards.

### 4. **RECORDING/TRACKING PRO BONO IN CHAMBERS**

- First, when a barrister accepts a pro bono case, enter the details onto MLC/LEX, choosing "pro bono" as the funding scheme. That helps with conflict checks.
- Secondly, barristers can enter onto MLC/LEX time spent on the case. This assists with claiming pro bono costs in successful cases (payable to [The Access to Justice Foundation](#)). Prior to a hearing, the clerk can cost up the hypothetical fees at counsel's normal rate and produce a draft "fee" note to assist summary assessment.
- Thirdly, you can use MLC/LEX or informal notes to track progress internally of what/how much pro bono your barristers undertake each year. This will help you report annually to Advocate if you join the [Chambers Pro Bono Framework](#).
- Add pro bono and wider CSR/ESG as a regular agenda item for your chambers' executive committee, or consider setting up a CSR/ESG committee.

# ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

## Contact

If you would like more information on anything in this guide, or support on how to implement these ideas in chambers, or have any suggestions for this guide, please get in contact with the Advocate team at

**[enquiries@weareadvocate.org.uk](mailto:enquiries@weareadvocate.org.uk)**

**We thank you for your continued support and your efforts to ensure access to justice for all.**

With thanks to:

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