

## Accessing pro bono advice services

### What does 'pro bono' mean?

'Pro bono publico' (usually shortened to pro bono) is a Latin phrase that translates to 'for the public good'. The phrase is used to refer to professional work that is undertaken voluntarily and without payment, or at a reduced fee, as a public service.

### What do I need to know before finding out what pro bono services are available?

If you think that you might need professional assistance with a matter, it is important to seek that assistance as soon as possible. This is for two reasons:

1. Some of the organisations that offer pro bono assistance operate by allocating cases via a brokerage service, where they match someone in need with a professional that can help. This can take time though, so many of them are unable to allocate urgent matters due to time restrictions;
2. It is likely to be easier for a professional to be able to assist you in resolving a matter if they are dealing with it from an early stage, rather than looking to help some way down the line.

If you are able to source someone to help you on a pro bono basis it is also important that you gather together any documentation that you might have, so that you have all of the necessary information available for the professional to consider when they first meet/speak with you. This will help to ensure a better use of the time that they are able to give you for free or at a reduced rate, which can sometimes be limited depending on the scheme through which you have been introduced to them.

### Where can people and organisations in Wales access pro bono assistance?

There are a number of organisations that offer access to pro bono services, in a range of subject areas, including those which are set out below. Please note that this list is not exhaustive, and professionals operating in your local area may also consider taking on pro bono matters on a case by case basis so it can be worthwhile exploring that option if you need assistance.

- **Law Works Cymru** - <http://www.wcva.org.uk/advice-guidance/lawworks-cymru> and [LawWorksCymru@lawworks.org.uk](mailto:LawWorksCymru@lawworks.org.uk).

LawWorks Cymru is a project that ensures access to free legal expertise for individuals and communities in Wales, who are in need of legal advice and are unable to pay.

The project is based in Cardiff and it has been set up to help co-ordinate pro bono provision throughout Wales. Rather than provide a frontline service, the project's role is to identify areas of particular need in order to target pro bono work effectively, to broker

casework, and to support volunteer lawyers in providing advice by telephone, by email, and face to face.

A variety of support can be offered to both third sector organisations and individuals, including legal advice clinics, online advice and resources, and in depth case work.

- **ProSupport project** - <http://www.pbi.org.uk/social-enterprise/> and 01646 689222.

The project, which is run by Pembrokeshire Business Initiative (PBI), works with a network of professionals who will provide free professional advice to voluntary and community groups and social enterprises in Pembrokeshire at crucial stages of their organisational development.

- **B2C Professionals - a Business Supporting Communities (B2C) Project initiative** - <http://www.b2cwales.co.uk/initiatives/b2c-professionals/> and 01745 353110

Business Supporting Communities (B2C) is a Lottery funded project delivered by the six North Wales based County Voluntary Councils (CVCs) that aims to create mutually beneficial relationships between business and communities within the six counties of North Wales; Flintshire, Wrexham, Denbighshire, Conwy, Anglesey & Gwynedd. The project delivers a number of initiatives, including *B2C Professionals* which links a broad range of specialist professional firms, from solicitors to graphic designers, to a variety of community groups that lack the resources to pay for professional advice and support.

- **i-Probono** - <http://www.i-probono.com/>.

i-Probono is the first online network to connect organisations in need of legal assistance with lawyers and students who want to use their legal skills for the public good.

It is a non-profit network with a global outreach that enables people to engage in projects from around the world, and allows organisations to source assistance across jurisdictions.

- **The Bar Pro Bono Unit** - <http://www.barprobono.org.uk/> and 0207 092 3960.

The Bar Pro Bono Unit is a charity which helps to find pro bono (free) legal assistance from volunteer barristers.

They can assist with:

- advice, representation and help at mediation
- cases in all legal areas
- cases where proceedings have not yet been started
- cases in all tribunals and courts in England and Wales.

Pro bono assistance is only available to those who cannot afford to pay and who cannot obtain public funding (Legal Aid).

- **Charity Property Help** - <http://www.rics.org/uk/about-rics/what-we-do/corporate-responsibility/charity-property-help/> and 0870 333 1600.

Charity Property Help is a pro bono service delivered by the Royal Institute of Chartered Surveyors (RICS), in partnership with the NCVO and the Charity Finance Directors' Group. The service is designed to assist voluntary organisations in the UK, by providing free support and guidance on all charity property matters, from planning and the environment through to project management and maintenance.

### **Further sources of assistance for voluntary organisations**

In addition to those listed above you may wish to contact the following organisations for assistance on a range of matters. Please note, however, it is unlikely that they will be able to give you formal advice in the same way as those working via a pro bono scheme can. Again this is not an exhaustive list.

- **Wales Council for Voluntary Action (WCVA) and your local County Voluntary Council or Volunteer Centre** - <http://www.wcva.org.uk/>, 0800 2888 329 and <http://www.wcva.org.uk/members-partners/county-voluntary-councils>.

WCVA works in partnership with a number of county voluntary councils (CVCs) and volunteer centres (VCs) across Wales, to provide a network of support organisations that help people who are inspired to make a positive difference to their communities.

They all work to help charities, voluntary and community groups, social enterprises, trustees and individual volunteers in a variety of ways, with WCVA operating at a national level and CVCs/VCs working at a local level.

- **Citizens Advice Bureau (CAB)** - <http://www.citizensadvice.org.uk/>

The CAB offers provide free, independent, confidential and impartial advice to everyone on their rights and responsibilities.

- **The Charity Commission** - <http://www.charitycommission.gov.uk/> and 0845 300 0218.

The Charity Commission is the independent Government department which registers and regulates charities in England and Wales, and they offer a large amount of guidance to those charities via their website and a telephone helpline.

- **HM Revenue and Customs** - <http://www.hmrc.gov.uk/charities/> and 0300 123 1073.

The HMRC offers a range of guidance, both online and via a dedicated helpline, to help charities and clubs pay the right tax and claim the reliefs that they are entitled to.