

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

24th May 2006

Ask us anything – so long as it's legal...

That's the offer from a group of local lawyers who aim to help as many people as they can in one evening, to mark the launch of a new free legal guidance service.

Bury Law Centre will open its doors and 'phone lines between 6pm and 8pm on Wednesday 7th June and people are invited to call with any legal query – however small. The motto is 'If we can't help you, we'll find someone who can'.

A free clinic will then run every Wednesday evening at the Law Centre on Bank St and the same service will be offered at community centres, starting with one in East Bury.

The lawyers are among hundreds who will be giving their time for free, as part of 'National pro bono Week', an annual campaign promoting legal work that is done 'for the good' rather than 'for profit'.

Although there is no charge made, the clinics have taken nearly a year to research and develop through a project funded by the Big Lottery. The project is particularly aimed at people on low income who might not access legal help.

Anyone who wants to 'Ask Us Anything' should call Bury Law Centre on (0161) 272 0666. Appointments will be booked in advance but as many drop-in and 'phone callers as possible will also be taken on the night.

NOTES FOR EDITORS

The Big Lottery Fund distributes half of all National Lottery good cause funding across the UK. The Fund aims to enable others to make real improvements to the lives of disadvantaged people and the wellbeing of communities, through fair and open funding of people, projects and programmes.

Big Advice Line (public enquiries) 0845 4 10 20 30

National Pro Bono Week is supported and promoted by the Law Society, Law Centres Federation and many of the largest legal firms in the UK.



About Bury Law Centre:

- offers its services free to those who are most in need, through government Legal Aid funding. It currently has quality-marked advice and casework services in employment, housing and immigration law.
- acts as a 'friendly first port of call' for anyone needing guidance on other legal problems and to 'signpost' them to solicitors or other agencies which can offer what they need.
- an independent local charity, set up in 2003 and managed by a committee made up of representatives from most of Bury's advice agencies, along with individual solicitors and other local people with an interest in ensuring there is access to justice for all.
- made national news last year with its pioneering work on asylum law, challenging the government's pilot scheme (Section 9) to remove the rights of failed asylum seekers to housing and welfare benefits.
- won a Big Lottery grant of £294,000, for a 3 year project, to develop volunteer opportunities. Currently has 9 volunteer staff and 2 pro bono advisors.
- expanded in July 2005, and moved to larger premises on Bank St.
- received the Guardian Public Service Finance Award in November 2005, for its sound financial business planning, through which it expanded staff, consolidated services and secured funding for three years.

ENDS