

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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### **Shysta takes time out from the Court to help out at the community centre**

Despite increasing demand for her Courtroom skills throughout the North West, successful young lawyer Shysta Habib has pledged one Thursday a month to help people to access their legal rights, who might not otherwise be able to do so

She linked up with Bury Law Centre, a legal advice charity, and ADAB, the Asian Development Association Bury to offer a free legal guidance clinic at ADAB's centre on Heywood St, which is in the heart of a mainly Punjabi community and a regeneration area with nationally-high levels of deprivation.

'I was drawn to a career in the Law because I wanted to make a difference.' The lawyer's tradition of volunteering *pro bono* – 'for the good' – seemed to be an appropriate way to put something back into the community.'

Coming ahead of the recent wave of interest in pro bono, highlighted by the BBC's drama 'The Innocence Project', Shysta's background and skills meant her offer was snapped up for the pilot 'outreach' legal clinic:

'As an advisor, there are issues that are much easier to deal with successfully if you have the experience of being brought up in a British Asian community. I studied law at Staffordshire University and achieved a distinction in Islamic Studies through the UK Islamic Mission forum. By undertaking a 6 month placement as a Citizen's Advice Bureau volunteer, I dealt with people from all walks of life and gained invaluable experience. Thanks to my parents, I also speak and write in Urdu, Punjabi which is a great advantage especially when dealing with clients who have difficulty in communicating in the English language.'

While at university, Shysta was nominated for the National Asian Young Achiever of the Year Award in 2002, whose patron is Cherie Booth, and won a scholarship for her vocational course before being called to the bar at Lincoln's Inn in London in July 2002. She is now a barrister at law practising at New Bailey Chambers, Preston, specialising in civil litigation, immigration and family law and represents clients at all levels of court. She has an article on 'Domestic Violence and Asian Women in the UK' due for publication in a national publication, the Welfare Law Journal.

Shysta's enthusiasm has clearly rubbed off onto other members of the family, as her sister is a qualified solicitor and her brother is studying for a law degree.

David Wildman, Bury Law Centre: ‘ Shysta is a dynamic young professional who came with an aim to reach more people in need and we’re delighted that we’ve been able to work together with her and ADAB to help achieve it.’

Tanveer Ahmed, Manager, ADAB: ‘I believe this service is a great initiative in the community, especially for those who don’t feel comfortable outside their zone or who struggle with English. ADAB is a place where people feel comfortable to come and utilise services provided by our various partners.’

From June, local residents will be able to book a free 30 minute appointment on any civil legal matter at a fortnightly clinic run alternately by Shysta and another lawyer. Up to 3 clients will be seen at each clinic.

Anyone who wants to book an appointment should call Bury Law Centre on 272 0666 or visit ADAB at 14 Heywood St, whose staff can also provide assistance in person or by phone on 764 6749.

ENDS

#### NOTES FOR EDITORS

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**Bury Law Centre** is a registered charity providing free, independent quality-marked legal services through Legal Aid and with the support of grant makers including the Big Lottery.

**ADAB** was established in 1997 to develop and implement initiatives that will improve and enhance the economic, educational, social, cultural and recreational conditions of the communities residing in the Metropolitan Borough of Bury.

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**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.

