

## Bury Law Centre's pro bono service - information for interested lawyers

### **What is the service about?**

The service aims to make it possible for a wider range of people to access basic legal advice. Our objectives are to overcome the barriers which discourage some people from using existing provision; to explain which areas of law their problems fall within; and either give initial advice or 'signpost' them to the most appropriate source of help.

To do this, we have developed three appointments clinics, based on a model developed by Law Works and tried and tested in Law Centres across the country. Two clinics offer general legal guidance on any civil law matter - one evening and one daytime. The third offers initial specialist advice on employee rights and was developed in partnership with the Employment Lawyers Association.

### **What is Bury Law Centre's position on pro bono?**

Bury Law Centre recognizes the long-standing tradition of voluntary work that exists within the legal profession, and is a signatory to the national 'Law Works' pro bono protocol. The service aims to 'match' the skills and time offered by lawyers to the needs of people in Bury who may otherwise be unable to access help through publicly-funded or private practice work.

### **Who insures me for the advice I give?**

Professional indemnity cover is provided for all pro bono advisors whom Bury Law Centre appoints, under the same policy and to the same value as our own caseworkers. On the whole, our work is regarded as low risk.

### **What sort of time commitment?**

It's really your call. What's most important to the success of the clinics is consistency, so we request that you pick a time which you know you can regularly manage.

Some lawyers find a weekly clinic easiest to make, while others prefer fortnightly or monthly. We will book appointments over a 2 – 2 ½ hour period and ask you to allow 3 hours in total. Although personal circumstances may change, we suggest that interested lawyers plan for a 6 month commitment, to make it worthwhile for both parties.

### **Where do the clinics take place?**

Our legal guidance clinics run weekly on Wednesdays from 6 - 8pm at Bury Law Centre and bi-monthly on Thursday mornings at a community centre in East Bury. The employment clinic runs fortnightly on Tuesday evenings. Directions and parking information will be provided.

### **What sort of resources will I have at my disposal?**

We have the following in place for in-house clinics:

- a Law Centre co-ordinator, who has overall responsibility for the running of the clinic
- a legal supervisor - a qualified Law Centre solicitor – either in person or 'on call'.
- a telephone or mobile phone
- a small library – housing, debt, welfare benefits, consumer credit, community care
- tea & coffee making facilities!
- a photocopier
- access to Lexis Nexis via LawWorks (not outreach)

Please note: Bury Law Centre and some outreach venues are **not** wheelchair accessible.

### **What does Bury Law Centre require from me as a legal professional?**

We are looking for qualified solicitors, barristers and legal executives, or advisors who are working towards these professions (nb. this depends on level of experience and whether we have the resources to properly supervise and support them in an advice-giving role).

We will ask you to come and meet with us, to discuss your interest and availability and, once agreed, we will need some evidence of your relevant practice experience and qualification.

You will be asked to sign for a copy of Bury Law Centre's Pro Bono Advisors' Handbook, which is for your policy and procedure reference, and serves as the agreement between us.

### **Would I just come in, give advice and go?**

We ask that you allow 15 minutes before and after your appointments, to get settled in, and to have a few words with the clinic co-ordinator.

At each interview, we ask you to do a brief record of the advice given, which enables us to review how the service is working and the numbers of targeted clients we are reaching.

### **What happens if I am interested to take up a particular case, either through the firm I work for, or as an individual, on a pro bono basis?**

All advice given is independent and, where a case is identified which Bury Law Centre cannot deal with, we offer clients a list of local practices known to offer the area of law they need. Your practice may be included on the list, on request.

Bury Law Centre is looking at ways to enable pro bono lawyers to take up cases individually. This will be subject to suitable supervision & extension of professional indemnity insurance.

### **Training – what does Bury Law Centre provide or require?**

We ask you to come for a one-off 'induction' before you begin advising - to show you round the centre, confirm when you are available and pass on the Pro Bono Advisors' Handbook.

Where necessary, we can agree some in-house training or shadowing for advisors who have limited experience in some of the areas of law offered by the clinic.

### **What is the next step, if I am interested?**

If you think that pro bono in Bury is for you, contact the Clinics Co-ordinator with your interest, experience and availability. If we can take up your offer, we'll agree arrangements and dates.

We require a copy of your current practice certificate and / or a professional reference.

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