

The UK Collaborative Plan for Pro Bono (the Plan) is a profession-led initiative. Each of the participating firms has a strong institutional commitment to pro bono and access to justice. Participating firms collaborate with each other in order to improve access to justice through pro bono in the UK and work collectively to develop systems and infrastructure to allow pro bono services to be effectively delivered to address unmet legal need.

The Plan also incorporates an aspirational target of 25 pro bono hours on average per lawyer in the UK each year. The statistics below relate to a survey of the pro bono work undertaken in the calendar year 2016 or financial year 2016/17 by 36 of the Plan's member firms.



Plan Meetings & UKademy

From the start of the Plan initiative, members have met regularly to share data and best practice on pro bono. The meetings identified a desire by many firms to share more information with each other. This led in 2015 to the creation of UKademy, an annual professional development conference for people managing pro bono programmes in the UK.

In addition to the annual conference, UKademy+ will provide free one-off sessions across the year on pro bono topics. Firms that are not yet signatories are invited to send their pro bono manager / representative to these events to learn more about the Plan and the help on hand to address pro bono challenges.

Specialist Collaborative Plan Pro Bono Projects

Domestic Violence & Family Law Legal Clinic

Tower Hamlets has one of the highest rates of reported domestic violence (DV) incidents across London, with an average of 11 DV incidents every day. DV against women currently accounts for a high proportion of the referrals to Tower Hamlets' Children's Social Care, making DV a key child protection issue. Recognising a need for free legal advice in DV cases, 6 firms (Gibson Dunn; Reed Smith; Ropes & Gray; Shearman & Sterling; Skadden, Arps, Slate, Meagher & Flom and Travers Smith), in conjunction with the University House Legal Advice Centre, provide a weekly drop-in DV & Family Law Legal Clinic in Tower Hamlets. University House triages clients carefully to ensure legal aid is accessed wherever possible. Since its launch in spring 2016 the Clinic has provided much-needed assistance in over 600 matters.

Legal Advice on Individual Rights in Europe

The AIRE Centre (Advice on Individual Rights in Europe) is a specialist charity promoting awareness of EU law rights for vulnerable individuals. A key area of work is the provision of free specialist legal advice to front-line agencies on EU law rights for individuals – an area of law mostly out of scope for legal aid. The demand for legal advice in this area has grown substantially. Lawyers from Ashurst, Herbert Smith Freehills and Reed Smith have been trained by expert lawyers at the AIRE Centre on EU free movement law and are now answering some of the requests for legal advice received by the AIRE Centre under the specialist supervision of the AIRE Centre's lawyers. This assistance has enabled the AIRE Centre to respond to more enquiries.

Disability Benefit Appeals

Plan firms Dechert; Reed Smith; Ropes & Gray; Skadden, Arps, Slate, Meagher & Flom and White & Case are partnering with University House Legal Advice Centre on an advocacy-based scheme to help individuals assert their rights at disability benefits appeal hearings. Recipients of both Employment and Support Allowance and Personal Independence Payments have been affected by recent welfare cuts, with many turning to food banks for support. Volunteer lawyers meet with clients to discuss their appeals, then prepare and present a submission to the First Tier Tribunal. Participating firms have on average an 80–100% success rate on appeal.