

An overview of Pro Bono Week 2024

From 4 to 8 November 2024, Pro Bono Week took place across the UK to showcase and discuss the role of lawyers in volunteering to provide free legal assistance to those in need.

There were 58 in person and online events across England, Northern Ireland, Scotland and Wales, involving an estimated 2,500 attendees.

Law students from across the UK volunteered as the Student Council to take notes at most of the events. You can find some of the key observations in this report.

During Pro Bono Week, 157 organisations posted on social media about pro bono, and various stories were published in the press and on websites. You can see a roundup of key posts and articles in our Wakelets: [day 1](#), [day 2](#), [day 3](#), [day 4](#) and [day 5](#).

Types of events during Pro Bono Week included:

- Launches and publications
- The recruitment of more lawyers to do pro bono
- Firms highlighting the pro bono organisations they work closely with
- Specific regional or area of law focus
- University-hosted events to encourage students to take part in pro bono.

Would you like to be introduced to organisations mentioned in this report? Find out more by emailing info@probonoweek.org.uk and we'll put you in touch.

Launches, publications and event highlights:

- A simultaneous Pro Bono Week launch event in Edinburgh and London, with attendance of both the Advocate General for Scotland and the [Solicitor General of England & Wales](#).
- Publication of [statistics by the UK Collaborative Plan for Pro Bono](#) showing that 78 member law firms collectively provided over 609,000 hours of pro bono during 2023. This was an increase of over 33,000 from the previous year, with the average pro bono undertaken increasing to 18 hours per lawyer.
- The launch by TrustLaw in the run up to Pro Bono Week of their [Measuring Bono Impact Guide](#) to assist law firms measure the impact of their pro bono.
- The launch at Parliament of an updated signposting [Guide to Pro Bono & Other Free Advice](#) in England & Wales, now endorsed by the Attorney General's Committee, including a Wales guide updated by the Pro Bono Committee for Wales. The sister guide for Scotland was also updated by the Faculty of Advocates.
- The [Faculty of Advocates](#) convened an event in Edinburgh to discuss the power of environmental law.
- [Public Interest Litigation Support](#) celebrated its 15th anniversary and revealed the [research findings](#) that map out the local public interest litigation landscape in Northern Ireland.

- The convening in Cardiff of an opening meeting of the [Pro Bono Committee for Wales](#) to discuss the strategy for pro bono in the nation.
- The National Pro Bono Centre and Pro Bono Connect marked one year of [Pro Bono Expert Support](#).
- The launch of the new [Pro Bono Costs Order](#) branch of the Pro Bono Expert Support Scheme, delivered in partnership with the Access to Justice Foundation.
- A [collaborative event featuring young lawyers](#) sharing their experiences and advice on pro bono work, with a keynote address from the Deputy President of the Supreme Court.
- The [Manchester Pro Bono Awards](#) took place for the first time, celebrating pro bono across the Greater Manchester area.
- [LawtechUK](#) organised a series of workshops to bring together practitioners in the access-to-legal space to explore how technology can enhance work and help overcome challenges.
- The launch of a new [website for the Attorney General and regional pro bono committees](#), featuring information from across the sector about pro bono.
- The [Great Legal Bake](#) took place nationally during Pro Bono Week, involving 100+ teams and raising over £25,000.

Highlights of topics discussed at events

The power of pro bono

Speakers at many events highlighted that when lawyers volunteer pro bono it can have a transformative effect on clients, truly changing lives.

For example, the official launch event showcased the transformative impact of pro bono work, with examples of how pro bono can help vulnerable clients facing eviction, financial hardship, immigration issues, and family separation.

[The Solicitor General, Sarah Sackman KC MP](#), explained during Pro Bono Week that *“The power of pro bono lies in its people. That starts with the clients. This week I heard from individuals, from the small business owner who avoided bankruptcy to the women reconnected with their children in prison, all of whom were represented by dedicated, tenacious, pro bono lawyers.”*

TrustLaw in launching their five-step [Pro Bono Impact Measurement Guide](#) highlighted how this impact can be measured and communicated.

Barred from justice

Events also shared powerful, everyday stories of the impact of lawyers and law students who give their time to protect the rights of those most disadvantaged in society. Three examples from charities are highlighted in this report:

- *Social Bite*, a homelessness charity, shared how pro bono legal services offered by law firms were vital. The assistance included regulatory advice to complex legal

frameworks for expanding their services, helping the charity focus on its mission to combat homelessness.

- *Refugee and Migrant Forum of Essex & London* shared cases where refugees and migrants, often facing language barriers and systemic exclusion, received vital legal representation. Pro bono lawyers helped clients navigate immigration law, secure status, and avoid deportation. This restored stability and dignity to families living in precarious circumstances.
- *Not Beyond Redemption* explained the need for representation for vulnerable women in the criminal justice system, particularly mothers wishing to reunite with their children. Pro bono services helped these women access legal support they could not otherwise afford, advocating for them in family courts. This helped to provide a pathway for rehabilitation and reconnection with their loved ones.

Embedding pro bono in your organisation and career

Discussions also placed pro bono at the heart of legal practice and heard from those at the forefront of establishing business structures for pro bono within law firms, chambers, in-house, universities and charities.

For example, an event explained how law firms and in-house teams can build pro bono frameworks to meet the specific needs of charitable organisations. Pro bono legal assistance from multiple law firms helped a charity to access legal expertise without stretching the charity's resources – across governance, regulatory compliance, and dispute resolution.

Student pro bono

The contribution that students can make in volunteering with the law school clinics was also highlighted. [Probonoskills.com](https://www.probonoskills.com) was introduced as a platform providing a range of training materials and resources for students involved in pro bono work.

The Aberdeen Law Project, Tayside and Perthshire Law Project, The Free Legal Advice Centre at Edinburgh Law School and Glasgow Caledonian University Law Clinic were showcases as examples of student-led pro bono initiatives making a difference in communities.

Pro bono across many regions

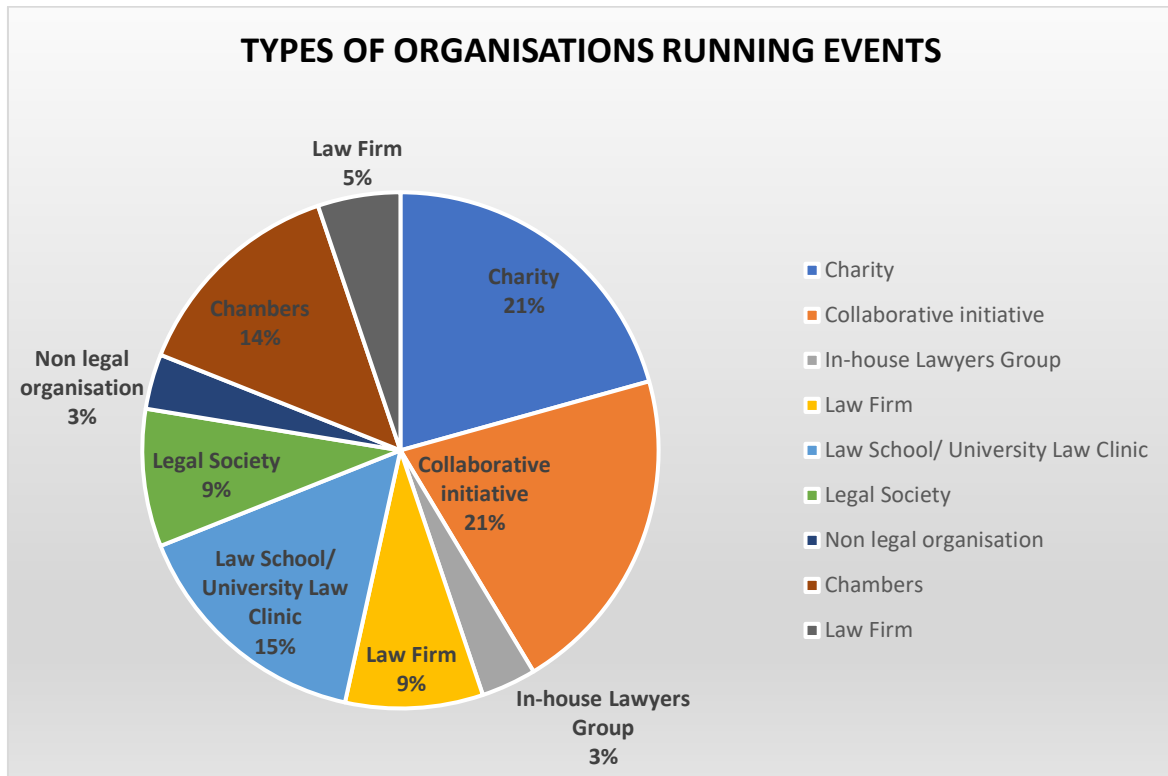
Finally, the geographical breath of events during Pro Bono Week showcased that pro bono is a national effort, delivered by lawyers across all parts of the UK.

Events have already been highlighted on pages 1 and 2 above in Belfast, Cardiff, Edinburgh and Manchester. In addition, at the North East Pro Bono Summit, organised by the [North East Pro Bono Committee](#), attendees discussed the need for more lawyers to support pro bono cases in court.

The [Yorkshire Pro Bono Committee](#) held an event with APPEAL, a charity fighting wrongful convictions, highlighting the case study on Andrew Malkinson highlighted systemic issues with reliance on eyewitness testimony over forensic evidence.

The [Birmingham Law Society Pro Bono Committee](#) organised an event to bridge the gap between pro bono services offered in the legal sector and the needs of the volunteer sector.

Key statistics



Event locations

Town	Count
Belfast	1
Birmingham	2
Cardiff	2
Edinburgh	3
Liverpool	1
London	26
Newcastle	1
Southampton	2
Manchester	2
Bristol	4
Dundee	1
Norwich	1
Leeds	2
Nationwide	5
Essex	1
Scotland	1
St. Alban's	1
Plymouth	1
Grand Total	57

Event target audience

Main target audience(s)	Count
Lawyers already doing pro bono	35
Lawyers interested in pro bono	23
Students already doing pro bono	15
Students interested in doing pro bono	16
Non-lawyer volunteers	17
Pro bono coordinators	18
Voluntary sector organisations	19
The public	5
MPs	3
Litigation Support Sector	1
Grand Total	152

373 handles posted about Pro Bono Week

