

Press toolkit 2026

Overview

Your participation in the 25th anniversary UK Pro Bono Week is an unmissable opportunity to engage with the press – raising your organisation's profile and demonstrating your leadership.

This toolkit has been developed by Pro Bono Week organisers to assist organisations like yours in securing press coverage. This type of coverage (sometimes called 'earned media') is highly valuable and not always easy to come by. It can have a much higher impact than advertising or social media.

We want to help you get press coverage about your pro bono work because this also raises much-needed awareness about access to justice issues.

This toolkit includes information and guidance on issuing press releases and managing media relationships, as well as two template press releases with ready-to-use quotes. It is most effective when used in conjunction with our other [media resources](#), such as our social media toolkit.

Local and regional media

There are different media ecosystems in different areas. Some are very well served by local media and will have more than one local newspaper, radio station or TV channel. Some towns or cities may not have a local paper dedicated to their specific area and you may instead need to target a larger regional paper (such as the *Yorkshire Post* or the *Northern Echo*). They are far more likely to run a story if they have a local relevant photographic opportunity, especially if the picture shows people from the local area.

The media needs you to fill their pages as much as you need them to promote your message, so press relations should be viewed as a partnership – you're doing journalists a favour just as much as they're doing one for you. Make local newsrooms aware of any events, activities and programmes which showcase the work and impact of your pro bono services.

Don't be afraid to invite journalists along to your in-person events, but do give them plenty of advance warning so they can plan ahead!

Make sure to consider their audience. For instance, local media publish stories for local people and often have an older demographic. Human interest is the main content of all local newspapers; people want to read about what happens to other people in their local area – real-life stories are key.

Regional media publish regional or national issues with a regional perspective. Securing coverage in regional media can be more challenging than with a local publication, but still easier than national media, which will only cover stories when they are exceptionally newsworthy.

What makes a good story?

Finding a strong news angle will help ensure interest from the media. Before getting in touch with an outlet, consider whether your story involves:

- A 'first' or something new – a first-of-its-kind project, a new pro bono clinic, or the recruitment of a new pro bono volunteer
- An ambitious project or case which could impact a lot of people
- A topical issue which is currently prominent in the national media
- A 'David and Goliath' story – overcoming the odds
- Milestones, including significant anniversaries
- Impact on the local community
- Local people or organisations

Journalists are busy people and you'll have the most success in securing coverage if you can make their job easier – don't force them to search for the news angle in your story, bring it to their immediate attention!

How to write a press release

When writing for the media, it is important to understand the sheer volume of press releases and photocall invitations which are received by newsrooms. Make yours as attention-grabbing as possible!

Come up with a headline which sums up the message in one snappy sentence or phrase. Try to be bold, original and creative with your title.

After the headline, the most important feature of your press release is the introductory paragraph, which must summarise the important points. A useful tool is to ensure you cover the ‘five Ws’ in one paragraph:

- WHO is involved?
- WHAT is happening?
- WHERE is it happening?
- WHEN is it happening?
- WHY should anyone be interested?

Top tips for writing a press release

1. Be concise – like a newspaper article. Aim for 25-30 words per paragraph and no more than one A4 side.
2. Write in the third person about your activity. Prioritise the facts, putting the most important information first.
3. Include an interesting quote from at least one person involved, for instance a VIP guest or one of your senior leadership figures.
4. At the very end, put the word ‘Ends’ and then a phone number and email address for someone in your organisation who can speak to journalists about your release if they have any questions.
5. Include a date at the top and the words ‘for immediate release’. Journalists need to know it’s neither old nor embargoed.
6. Include at least one or two photos – see our section on Photos.
7. You can talk about the wider pro bono work of lawyers and include a paragraph about Pro Bono Week as “Notes to editors” at the end.

Check out our template press releases at the end of this toolkit.

Photos

Print media are always looking for good pictures, so including a photograph with a press release will enhance your chances of getting it published.

Sometimes, a local paper will send a photographer to your event. However, don’t assume this will be the case! Plan ahead and ensure someone takes a few photos of your speakers or attendees. You may decide to use a professional photographer, but you can also take good photos with a phone.

What makes a good photo?

- It's a photo which illustrates your press release.
- People! You could try for a good 'action shot', showing people at work or engaging with your event, or you could take a group photo of the key members and spokespeople at the event.
- When you're sending photos of specific people, make sure they're named, either in the filename or in your press release.
- Print media need high-resolution and high-quality images – send originals, not compressed versions downloaded from social media.
- You should only send one or two photos at a time, otherwise your email may be blocked by a newsroom's spam filter.

How to approach the press

Step 1: Write your press release and find a suitable photo to go with it.

Step 2: Find contact details for an outlet and get in touch. You can usually find contact details on their website or social media pages. Send your press release by email, ideally in the morning. If you don't hear back within a day or two, you can politely follow up with a phone call to the newsdesk.

Step 3: Ensure your contact details are easy to find on your press release, as journalists may have questions. Respond to any press enquiries promptly!

Step 4: Many journalists are active on social media platforms like LinkedIn or X. Follow or connect with them, and send them a message. Add your press release to your website and post a link to it on your social media pages.

Step 5: Timing is crucial! If your press release is about an upcoming event, send it at least a week beforehand. If it's about an event that's already taken place, send it as soon as possible afterwards – before it's old news.

Speaking to the media

Journalists have limited time to meet deadlines. Make sure you're prepared to deal with any follow-up queries after your press release is sent out:

1. Have someone available who is happy speaking to a reporter (an official spokesperson or someone who has benefited from or

delivered your work, e.g. a pro bono lawyer).

2. Have ready-to-use content prepared – facts and statistics, press release, photos, quotes, video/audio content they can publish.
3. Think of potential criticisms and how you would respond to them.
4. Consider the target audience – tailor your message to who the journalist is writing for. The more suited to their reader, the more likely your story will be featured.
5. Meet their deadline.

Template press release: Pro bono event

This is an example of a press release you could send to local media to promote an upcoming event which will spotlight your pro bono work.

When writing a press release like this, it's important to have a 'hook' that will appeal to media, like we discussed on page 2 of this toolkit. For this example, we've chosen a significant anniversary. If you were hosting a panel discussion, your 'hook' could be a teaser of what will be said on the day.

Even though the event has not yet taken place, you should still send a photo with this press release – either a staff headshot or a photo of the building.

PRESS RELEASE

Free legal support clinic to celebrate 50th anniversary

Date

A ground-breaking Glasgow charity which has offered free legal support to the local community for 50 years will celebrate the milestone with colleagues, clients and friends during UK Pro Bono Week.

Now in its 25th anniversary year, UK Pro Bono Week (2-6 November 2026) recognises and celebrates the legal profession's long-standing tradition of providing free legal help to those in need. This year's theme – "Celebrate a tradition. Inspire action. Shape the future." – is about reflecting on the proud history of pro bono as well as its future in a rapidly changing world.

A special celebration event will take place at Glasgow Law Clinic's office on Tuesday 3rd November from 6pm, where attendees will hear from the charity's founder as well as some of its volunteer lawyers.

John Smith, director of Glasgow Law Clinic, says:

"Half a century after we first opened our doors in Govanhill, our charity now provides vital support every year to more than 500 local people who are dealing with matters including debt, homelessness and discrimination.

"We are grateful to the lawyers who volunteer their skills through our clinic and look forward to celebrating them during UK Pro Bono Week."

Toby Brown, chair of the UK Pro Bono Week organising committee, adds:

“With UK Pro Bono Week now in its 25th year, the organising committee chose a theme which not only celebrates our history but also reflects on the future of pro bono across the UK.

“At a time defined by different challenges and the rapid transformation of legal practice by AI, it is encouraging to see that the legal profession remains strongly committed to pro bono.

“We are delighted to be working so closely with firms, chambers, in-house legal teams, charities and universities on a programme fit for our silver anniversary, building on last year’s bumper series of around 60 events in over a dozen cities and online.”

Pro bono legal services are not a substitute for a proper system of legal aid. However, for individuals not eligible for legal aid but are unable to pay, and for those charities or community groups with limited resources, free advice and representation provided by volunteer lawyers is often the only means of obtaining access to justice.

Ends

For more information, contact John Smith on 07123456789 or email john.smith@glasgowlawclinic.com.

NOTES TO EDITORS

Glasgow Law Clinic is located at 123 Main Street and has served the local community since 1976. You can find us on social media at @GGLawClinic.

Pro bono is where lawyers volunteer to provide free legal help to those in need. It is not intended to and cannot replace a properly funded legal aid system.

UK Pro Bono Week takes place every year, organised by an organising committee that includes representatives from pro bono charities, law schools, law firms, in-house lawyers and the professional bodies. For more information visit probonoweek.org.uk.

Template press release: Great Legal Bake

This is an example of a press release you could send to local media to highlight your organisation's fundraising through the Great Legal Bake.

We've highlighted the bits you should replace with your own organisation's details. Send it with one or two photos of your team during the event.

PRESS RELEASE

Oxford lawyers raise £350 for access to justice charities

Date

Colleagues at **Oxford Law Firm** have raised **£350** for access to justice charities by taking part in the Great Legal Bake during Pro Bono Week.

Now in its 25th anniversary year, UK Pro Bono Week (2-6 November 2026) recognises and celebrates the legal profession's long-standing tradition of providing free legal help to those in need. This year's theme – "Celebrate a tradition. Inspire action. Shape the future." – is about reflecting on the proud history of pro bono as well as its future in a rapidly changing world.

Every year as part of Pro Bono Week, lawyers swap their keyboards for kitchen counters, making baked goods and selling them in their workplaces to raise much-needed dough for The Access to Justice Foundation, London Legal Support Trust and frontline advice charities in 'the Great Legal Bake'.

The **£350** raised by **Oxford Law Firm** on **Tuesday morning** will be split 50/50 between The Access to Justice Foundation and local charity **Oxford Charity**.

Alice Wonderland, partner and CSR lead at Oxford Law Firm, says:

"We are hugely proud of our team for their efforts to raise these funds for access to justice charities. As lawyers working on the frontline, we know these funds are much-needed and we're always happy to play our part."

"I would personally like to thank White Rabbit, Cheshire Cat and Mad Hatter for organising our participation in the Great Legal Bake and Pro Bono Week – an important part of the charitable activity we undertake year-round."

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For more information, contact Alice Wonderland on 07123456789 or email alice.wonderland@oxfordlawfirm.com.

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