

HOW LAWWORKS CAN SUPPORT MPS TO DEVELOP PRO BONO LEGAL ADVICE CLINICS

*A Practical Guide for Parliamentarians in
England and Wales*



Who Are LawWorks?

LawWorks (the Solicitors Pro Bono Group) supports the provision of free legal advice to individuals and community groups who cannot afford to pay and are unable to access legal aid. We are pleased to offer free guidance to MPs interested in facilitating pro bono legal clinics in their constituencies, working with local solicitors, advice agencies, and community stakeholders.

Pro bono legal clinics provide free legal advice to individuals and communities who cannot afford to pay for legal support and are unable to access legal aid. These clinics are often staffed by volunteer solicitors and supported by law schools, advice agencies, or community organisations.

The LawWorks Clinics Network is a UK-wide network coordinated by LawWorks, comprising over 300 independent clinics that provide vital legal help on issues such as housing, employment, family, and consumer law. By bringing together legal professionals and local organisations, these clinics help address unmet legal need and strengthen community resilience. Importantly, they play a key role in promoting access to justice, ensuring that vulnerable and excluded individuals are not left without a voice or recourse in the legal system.

If your office is interested in setting up a pro bono clinic in your constituency, LawWorks might be able to help.

How LawWorks Can Help

LawWorks can:

- Offer free consultancy on clinic set-up and sustainability
- Connect MPs with law firms, university clinics, and legal volunteers
- Provide resources, templates, training, and access to our clinic network

✉ Contact LawWorks at: clinics@lawworks.org.uk

🌐 Visit: www.lawworks.org.uk

Ten Essential Steps to Establish a Pro Bono Legal Clinic

1 Assess Local Legal Need

It is likely that you will already have a clear picture of the types of legal issues regularly faced by your constituents. If not, LawWorks can help introduce you to relevant organisations and resources to assist you to gather this insight. For example:

- Local Citizens Advice, law centres, and community groups.
- LawWorks reports and Law Society legal aid gap research.

2 Define the Clinic's Purpose

Defining your clinic's purpose is crucial. LawWorks can help give you tips for drafting a short proposal outlining:

- Why the clinic is needed in your constituency.
- Who the clinic will serve (e.g. residents facing housing, employment, or benefits issues).
- How the clinic meets local needs.

3 Secure Organisational Support

Once you have decided who in your team will lead on this project, you will want to understand your key stakeholders. This will vary depending on your local area and the type of clinic you are hoping to develop.

- LawWorks can advise you on the practicalities of setting up a clinic and connect you with existing networks and legal partners.
- LawWorks can work with you to gain support from relevant stakeholders (e.g. local council, law centres, or advice agencies).

22

new legal pro bono
advice clinics were
launched in 2024.

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Build Partnerships with Local Legal Stakeholders

You will need to build up strong partnerships with legal stakeholders in order to secure your pro bono volunteers. LawWorks can:

- Facilitate introductions and share examples of successful partnerships.
- Help you engage local law firms, university law schools, and advice agencies.
- Identify and engage solicitors who are willing to volunteer.
- Work with you to identify organisations already offering advice who could host or support a clinic.

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Determine your Clinic 'Model'

There are many different ways to run a pro bono legal clinic.

LawWorks can help you assess the pros and cons of each model to determine which is most suitable, such as:

- Is it a one-off service, or an on-going casework service.
- What areas of law will be covered.
- What is the client relationship and supervision model.

66,000+

people helped by clinics
on the LawWorks Clinics
Network in 2024.

6

Plan the Clinic's Practical Operations

Once you have picked your model, we can also help you to decide key logistics, such as:

- Where the clinic will operate (e.g. constituency office, community centre, advice agency).
- Whether it will use an appointment or drop-in system.
- How advice will be delivered: in-person, remotely, or hybrid.
- What systems will be used for record keeping and client follow-up.

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Ensure Appropriate Insurance Cover

Once you have determined which organisation will host the clinic there is a need to ensure appropriate insurance cover.

- LawWorks offers guidance on insurance options depending on the clinic model and volunteers involved.

90,000+

enquires responded to by
clinics on the LawWorks
Clinics Network.

8

Develop Volunteer Materials and Protocols

A clinic will need a simple volunteer handbook covering:

- Clinic policies and procedures.
- Confidentiality and safeguarding.
- Points of contact and referral pathways.

LawWorks provides template volunteer handbooks and associated policies.

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Recruit and Train Volunteers

Before your clinic can get off the ground you will need to recruit and train your volunteers. You can work with LawWorks to:

- Connect with local solicitors and law students who may want to volunteer.
- Use LawWorks' template documents and training materials for volunteer induction.

LawWorks may also be able to arrange training tailored to the clinic's legal focus.

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Publicise and Launch the Clinic

In order to get clients you will want to promote the clinic locally through:

- Constituency communications.
- Local advice agencies, libraries, and community centres.
- LawWorks' and your own social media and newsletters.

A formal launch can raise awareness and build community trust.



LawWorks is a charity working in England and Wales to connect volunteer lawyers with people in need of legal advice, who are not eligible for legal aid and cannot afford to pay and with the not-for-profit organisations that support them.

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