
advocate



Advocate Monthly Top Ten

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Advocate says goodbye to Chief Operating Officer & Director of Casework, Shyam Popat

"I joined the Bar Pro Bono Unit as a fresh-faced graduate caseworker, and fourteen years later, I still remember the first case I placed, and heartbreakingly, the first family case I couldn't. Since then, I've had the privilege of working alongside remarkable barristers, practice managers, and clerks who consistently go above and beyond to support some of the most vulnerable members of our society."

This month, Advocate bids farewell to our Director of Casework and Chief Operating Officer – Shyam Popat – after many years of dedicated service to our organisation.

Below, Shyam shares a few words paying tribute to his time with us.

"After nearly six years leading Advocate's Casework team, it feels surreal to be saying goodbye. Advocate, the Bar's Pro Bono Charity, is a truly unique organisation. Unique in its mission, in the people it serves, in the barristers who volunteer, and in the extraordinary team behind the scenes. It's a charity like no other.

I joined the Bar Pro Bono Unit as a fresh-faced graduate caseworker, and fourteen years later, I still remember the first case I placed, and heartbreakingly, the first family case I couldn't. Since then, I've had the privilege of working alongside remarkable barristers, practice managers, and clerks who consistently go above and beyond to support some of the most vulnerable members of our society. You are all extraordinary, and the Bar deserves far more recognition for the quiet, powerful work it does every day.

I'll never forget how the Bar rallied during the pandemic, helping more people than Advocate had ever supported before. The English and Welsh Bar is a true inspiration.

As I step away, without getting too sentimental, I want to express my deepest thanks to Advocate's Trustees, past and present, who ensure this charity stays true to its purpose. To our reviewers, who work tirelessly behind the scenes making difficult decisions about who we can help, thank you. And my final, most heartfelt thanks go to the Advocate team (past and present), led by the unflappable Rebecca Wilkie. You are the heartbeat of this organisation. Your calm, empathetic approach ensures that those silenced by inequality are heard and given a real chance at justice."

We would like to congratulate Shyam as he starts his new role as CEO at [YESS Law](#) - a legal advice charity specialising in employment law matters.

[See our staff team](#)



Pro Bono Week 2025: Get involved!

From 3rd to 7th November, the legal profession will come together to celebrate **Pro Bono Week 2025** – a key moment in the year to recognise the extraordinary voluntary contribution made by legal professionals across the UK in providing free legal help to those who need it most. This year's theme, "*Pro Bono in Action*", will shine a light on stories of impact, the professional and business development benefits of pro bono, and practical ways to get involved.

There are plenty of ways to take part, from hosting an event, sharing your chambers' pro bono stories, or joining one of the many sessions taking place throughout the week. Make sure to check out the [full calendar of events for Pro Bono Week](#). If you'd like to collaborate with Advocate by co-hosting a seminar, please get in touch with our Engagement Manager, [Faye](#).

[More about Pro Bono Week](#)



Join us for Carols for Pro Bono at Temple Church

Tickets are now on sale for *Carols for Pro Bono* - our annual Christmas carol concert held in partnership with LawWorks. Returning for its eighth year, join us for this much-loved festive highlight on 16th December at the beautiful Temple Church London.

Expect an evening of carols, exceptional music and readings from special guests including **The Rt Hon Baroness Carr**, actress **Rachael Stirling**, and **Neil Stuke** of BBC's *Silk*. Enjoy performances from Duo Melus (piano and flute) and the acclaimed Collegium Musicum chamber choir. All proceeds will support the work of both Advocate and LawWorks in helping connect people in urgent need of free legal help with expertise of volunteer lawyers, making the concert not only a festive highlight, but a meaningful one.

[Purchase your tickets now](#)

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Advocate Statistics

203 Live cases currently looking for assistance	Summary of live cases: Family: 30% Employment: 30% Chancery & Commercial: 13% <u>advocate</u>
75 Pieces of work placed in September 2025	
23 New Panel Members in September 2025	

Western Circuit caseworker participates in the Southampton Legal Walk



On 17th September, more than 180 legal professionals came together to support access to justice at the annual Southampton Legal Walk - a 10km sponsored walk organised by the London Legal Support Trust to raise much-needed funds for free legal advice services across Southampton and Hampshire.

Our Western Circuit caseworker, Louis, represented Advocate at the walk. He enjoyed networking with legal professionals and other charities doing essential work to provide vital legal support on the ground.

Louis said: *"It was fantastic to be part of the Southampton Legal Walk, representing Advocate alongside so many passionate legal professionals and charities. The event was a powerful reminder of our commitment in the region to ensuring people facing legal difficulties aren't left to navigate them alone."*

A huge thank you to everyone who walked, donated, and helped spread the word. Your support makes a real difference. If you would like to donate, you are still able to do so below.

[Donate now](#)



Family law barrister **Beth Payne (Coram Chambers)**, who has now successfully completed her pupillage, recently shared her reflections on undertaking pro bono work during her final seat of pupillage, describing it as a “*real feel-good moment*” - both personally and professionally.

Through Advocate’s [Pupil Pledge](#), Beth provided free legal representation to a vulnerable client in the family courts, gaining invaluable hands-on advocacy experience and sharpening her client care skills.

A real ‘feel good’ moment: Beth's pupil story

Beth writes: “*With legal aid cuts and the cost-of-living crisis, access to justice in family law has never been more important...Advocate gave me the opportunity to make a meaningful difference while developing my practice.*”

Pupil barristers can take on one piece of pro bono work from their second six onwards to be eligible for the Pupil Pledge.

[Read Beth's story](#)

Shout out to Panel Members...

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Jack Bickerton

Cobden House Chambers

Our many thanks to Jack Bickerton of Cobden House Chambers for representing our applicant, who is the mother of a child concerned in child arrangement proceedings.

The mother applied to Advocate following the father retaining the child and refusing her access. There were allegations of parental alienation and emotional abuse. The mother was looking for advice and representation for the final hearing, and Jack stepped up to assist.

The mother and Jack explored every avenue but ultimately, the mother decided to withdraw from the proceedings with the child's welfare at the heart of her decision. The mother wrote to both Advocate and to Jack to express how grateful she was for the support she received during what has been a highly emotional and challenging time for her and her family.

Thank you, Jack

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**Kate Balmer
&
John Platts-Mills**

Devereux Chambers

Thank you to Kate Balmer and John Platts-Mills of Devereux Chambers for assisting our applicant in a long-running racial discrimination claim against his employer. In the Employment Tribunal, the employer had denied all allegations of discrimination, and the Employment Tribunal dismissed the discrimination claims. Our applicant appealed to the Employment Appeal Tribunal on the basis that the Employment Tribunal had erred in law in its analysis of time limits and whether the conduct in question related to race. John assisted with advice and representation at the appeal sift stage. Kate then provided pro bono representation at the final Employment Appeal Tribunal hearing, where she was successful in overturning the Tribunal's findings for two serious claims of race-related harassment. Our applicant was hugely grateful for their support, writing to us to say: *"This overturning represents not only a legal*

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**Luke Bloomer
&
Sapna Jain**

St Ives Chambers & 1GC Family Law

We would like to thank Luke Bloomer (previously of Rowchester Chambers but now of St Ives Chambers) and Sapna Jain of 1GC Family Law for assisting our applicant, a mother of two children, in long-running family court proceedings concerning the children's contact with their father. Previous child arrangement orders had been made for supervised contact, but the father has since made repeated applications, all of which have been rejected due to him suffering from significant mental health issues and for behaving erratically in court, as well as the eldest child's wishes not to have contact with him. Luke and Sapna assisted with advice and representation at multiple hearings. The mother expressed how grateful she was for their valuable support in what has been a difficult period for her and her children.

Thank you, Luke & Sapna

*correction but also a vital
personal vindication for
me and my family".*

Thank you, Kate & John



We look forward to working with you this term!

As we step into the new legal term, we look forward to continuing to work with barristers and chambers to make a pro bono impact. Every pro bono case you take on with Advocate helps someone get heard at a critical point in their lives.

Your skills can make a truly life-changing difference. Whether you take a case, volunteer with one of our [Partner / On the Day Duty Schemes](#), or help shape pro bono culture in your chambers through the [Chambers Pro Bono Framework](#), there are many ways to contribute.

Find out more about working with us below and if you have any questions, please contact our Engagement Manager, [Faye Pauffley](#).

[More on working with Advocate](#)