



RPC Pro Bono

2021/2022 Review

October 2022

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Introduction

Welcome to the RPC Pro Bono Review 2021/2022

In this publication we provide an overview of the Pro Bono work that RPC has undertaken over the past year, as well as an insight into our plans to expand our Pro Bono offering over the next 12 months.

In our ‘2020 Year in Review’ publication, we touched-on the social and economic challenges that were likely to follow the coronavirus pandemic. The severity of those challenges has been greater than many could have anticipated.

Since the start of the pandemic, and by way of example, food bank usage in the UK has risen by nearly 30% and the number of children eligible for free school meals has increased by 160,000. These financial hardships have been further aggravated in more recent months by rampant inflation, rising taxes, and spiralling fuel costs in the context of a broader ‘Cost of Living Crisis’.

Whilst, for most, the world is beginning to return to some semblance of normality, for many it is more financially perilous and uncertain than ever. At this juncture, access to justice and the provision of pro bono legal services is critical.

We hope that this summary of our award-winning pro bono work will pique your interest and inspire you to get involved in the numerous projects that are (or shortly will be) underway at RPC.

Please do contact any member of the Pro Bono Committee if you want to participate in any of these initiatives – or if you have any questions.



Our Pro Bono work in 2021-2022

Hong Kong

Recent awards

Our Hong Kong office has once again been recognised for its commitment to pro bono and community work, receiving the distinguished Community Service Law Firm Award and Silver Law Firm Award in the Law Society of Hong Kong's Pro Bono and Community Work Recognition Programme 2021. Six of our Hong Kong-based fee earners also received individual awards.

In addition, RPC Hong Kong has won the Pro-Bono award at the China Business Law Awards 2022 and is one of the nine firms on the shortlist for the Asian Pro Bono Initiative of the Year award by The Asia Legal Awards 2022. This is an excellent reflection of the work we have continued to do at RPC despite stringent COVID-19 restrictions in place in Hong Kong.

We continue to work extensively with Justice Without Borders (JWB – discussed below), and the Hong Kong office has also worked on several CSR / Environmental initiatives with local charities which contributed to the Distinguished Community Service Law Firm Award (a first for RPC Hong Kong).

Justice Without Borders

The RPC Hong Kong office has continued its award-winning work with the multinational charity, Justice Without Borders.

JWB focuses locally and regionally on cross-border civil litigation for migrant workers who have been victims of labour exploitation or human trafficking. JWB works with pro bono lawyers to ensure that access to justice continues to be an option for vulnerable migrant workers, even after they return home.

RPC's work with JWB focuses on two areas. Firstly, providing advice directly to individual domestic workers (in respect of both criminal and civil matters). Secondly, providing essential guidance and advice on a pro bono basis on the corporate governance of JWB as a charitable entity in Hong Kong.

During the last year, RPC has provided legal advice and representation (including advocacy) to a domestic worker in support of her claim against a former employer for verbal and physical abuse.

PILnet

RPC Hong Kong has also continued its relationship with PILnet - a platform that connects NGOs in need of pro bono legal services with law firms in Hong Kong to provide pro bono assistance.



London

Liberty's Advice Line

Over the last year, RPC has continued to support the UK's largest civil liberties organisation, Liberty.

Liberty challenges injustice, defends freedom, and campaigns to ensure that everyone in the UK is treated fairly. Liberty's Advice Line provides free legal and practical advice on human rights issues, helping people to understand the nature of their legal issue and their next steps to resolving it. The Advice Line can offer assistance on a wide variety of topics, including: issues under the Human Rights Act 1998; judicial review; discrimination; police complaints; surveillance; data protection; and, protest.

RPC's volunteers regularly support users of the Liberty Advice Line by collating information about the user's case, signposting users to available resources, and providing free legal advice.

Launch It

Building on its remarkable success during 2020/2021, RPC has continued to run workshops and legal advice programmes with the charity Launch It.

Launch It is an organisation that supports young people who are from disadvantaged backgrounds who are looking to start a business. It does that in three ways: (1) provision of subsidised workspace at its centres in London and Dundee in Scotland; (2) through a mentoring programme; and (3) through skills training programme – teaching them key skills around finance, (eg how to write a business plan) that they need to help get their businesses off the ground and to grow them.

Where RPC is supporting is on the third limb – with the skills training programme. We run an annual programme of workshops on a variety of different topics – both legal and non-legal – including topics such as IP, brand and marketing, commercial contracts and data protection, financial planning/budgeting, incorporating a company, funding options for starts ups, employment law and customer services.

RPC also provide a pro bono legal advice service where we answer a discrete number of follow-on questions after the workshops – typically where the entrepreneurs have questions about how the topic covered in the workshop affects their business or, they might be experiencing a particular issue that they want advice on.

Over the last year, in conjunction with Launch It, RPC has run 14 workshops and has supported over 100 young entrepreneurs.



International Lawyers Project

The RPC Pro Bono Committee has continued to support pro bono charity, the International Lawyers Project, through the provision of charitable donations.

The International Lawyers Project coordinates a network of lawyers that support communities, civil societies, and governments on cross-jurisdictional issues such as corruption, environmental justice, and transparency.

LawWorks

In February 2022, RPC became a member of the UK-based pro bono charity, LawWorks.

LawWorks is an organisation that connects law firms with individuals, charities, and NGOs that require pro bono legal assistance.

Individual lawyers at RPC have taken part in a pilot of LawWorks' pro bono initiative, Free Legal Answers. Free Legal Answers is an online platform through which individuals are able to submit legal questions concerning consumer, debt, and employment law – akin to an online legal advice centre. Lawyers then log onto the platform and respond to the questions that have been submitted.

Having undertaken a pilot of Free Legal Answers, RPC will shortly be rolling-out a firmwide programme through which lawyers from across the firm will be able to provide pro bono advice on the platform (discussed below).

Looking ahead to 2022-2023

RPC intends for an ambitious expansion of its pro bono offering in 2022/2023 to meet the growing demand for pro bono assistance in the UK and overseas.

Listen out for further updates in the near future concerning the below projects and initiatives.

Student Projects

Prior to the coronavirus pandemic, RPC supported a number of UK and Singapore universities with a range of student-led pro bono initiatives. Unfortunately, due to the ‘remote-learning’ restrictions placed on these universities – and the annual turnover of students – these initiatives have come to an end.

During the coming year, RPC will again be partnering with various universities to support and sponsor student-led pro bono projects. More information on this will follow over the next few months.

Launch It

RPC will be hosting a packed programme of workshops with young entrepreneurs over the coming year.

LawWorks: Free Legal Answers

As discussed above, the Pro Bono Committee has been working on launching the RPC’s first project with LawWorks and has recently completed a pilot of the Free Legal Answers platform.

The Pro Bono Committee has received significant interest from volunteers across the firm to participate in Free Legal Answers and it is great to see that so many of our people will be getting involved.

The benefit of Free Legal Answers is that it provides an initiative through which lawyers at any career level can provide pro bono legal support. RPC has formalised a structure through which free legal advice can be provided by trainees and junior lawyers (with appropriate supervision). The inclusion of more junior lawyers in

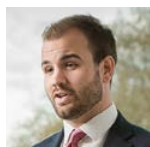
the firm’s pro bono initiatives will vastly increase (i) the number of employees participating in pro bono programmes, (ii) the number of hours dedicated to pro bono work, and, most importantly (iii) the number of people that are receiving pro bono legal advice.

Look out for further announcements about RPC’s collaboration with LawWorks in the coming weeks!

Please do get in touch with any member of the RPC Pro Bono Committee if you’re interested in getting involved in RPC Pro Bono or would like to hear more about any of these initiatives.



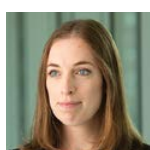
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