

Samantha Folland

Pro Bono: 'From minimal understanding to the great need to continue'

My experience with the Freedom Law Clinic (FLC) has broadened my understanding of the importance of pro bono work. Before I started my Open Justice activity, I had a vague appreciation for pro bono, and why it was important in today's legal system.

After completing the project with the FLC, I can completely understand why lawyers feel a moral obligation to undertake pro bono work, and the desire to help those who are socially disadvantaged without access to the justice system I have said throughout multiple meetings with my group that it has been 'amazing to help the client in a way that others would not' and that 'there is something rewarding on a personal level' by doing this through pro bono work. This has had the effect of changing my mind on the idea of pro bono work as we have advanced with this project.

I always thought that pro bono would be fairly straightforward, especially with the FLC working on this particular case. This was not how pro bono works at all, as I found out very quickly when the workload tripled. However, the harder the workload became, the more rewarding the work felt. I kept reminding myself that we were doing this work to help the client, and not selfishly to earn money.

My participation during this Open Justice activity was to work with my group, and a slightly larger group to produce a document that could be used by the FLC to aid a client's case. This involved a lot of remote team meetings, which proved challenging to arrange for times that worked for everyone. We kept the team agreement we set at the beginning of this module in mind throughout to ensure that everyone was treated fairly and that everyone was contributing. I spearheaded a lot of the meetings, contributing ideas for the final document, and ensuring that it was how we wanted it to be before submission.

Since completing this project, I have reflected on what pro bono meant to me and the justice system as a whole. My work with the FLC has shown me that pro bono has the potential to gain back the public's trust, which has been previously lost through lack of social justice. Pro bono work is just as important as that of any other work in law, or any other profession. It provides a belief to all that you are able to access justice no matter what your background or current situation is. This ethical side of pro

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bono ensures that anyone in the legal profession is able to morally and ethically help as many people as they can.

I feel like pro bono has been developed further than explained in the module units. Until you are able to experience pro bono first-hand, and have the reward of knowing that you have helped a client, it is very difficult to understand the full impact of pro bono. Going forward in my career, I hope to be able to do more in the way of pro bono work on a larger scale. Before beginning my work with the FLC, I did not believe that pro bono would appeal to me as much as other legal work would. My view of this has changed though given how rewarding the entire process has been, even without knowing the final result of our activity for the client.