

# Minutes: 08 September 2020

- Attendees
- Victoria Channing, Simmons & Simmons (chair) **(VC)**
  - Miriam Bishop, Bevan Brittan (vice chair) **(MB)**
  - Dave Miller (Avon and Bristol Law Centre) **(DM)**
  - Julian Hemming, Osborne Clarke **(JH)**
  - Jane Emanuel (Avon and Bristol Law Centre) **(JE)**
  - Jeremy Thompson, Support Through Court **(JT)**
  - Deborah Sheldon, TLT **(DS)**
  - Rachel Wood, UWE **(RW)**
  - Amanda Crutchley, University of Law **(AC)**
  - Lucy Burrows, BPP **(LB)**
  - Eve Farnsworth, Simmons & Simmons **(EF)**
  - Michael Hayles, Burges Salmon **(MH)**
  - Daniel Preddy, DAC Beachcroft **(DP)**

## 1. Website / LinkedIn

### a. Feedback

VC presented the new website and was asking for views on the design / content.

The group was generally pleased with the website and thanked the designer and VC for their hard work on this.

JE flagged that the imagery was not very diverse and all the images used were quite “white”.

VC advised that stock photos had just been used for the time being but was very keen that the website represent us and the communities that we serve. She queried whether anyone had any that might be appropriate that we can use so that we can use these and replace the stock images accordingly.

JE – the Law Centre may have something, she will look and come back to VC.

### b. Members area

VC highlighted the new members’ area of the website; she has sent a link to the group for this (password protected) and it gives access to two additional pages: minutes of meetings and resources (inc speakers’ presentations and their email addresses in case people want to approach them one to one).

VC encouraged the group to submit member requests asap. Members will also get email updates when there are new blog posts.

### c. News posts

VC explained that there are currently “tester posts” are on the website now. The idea is that we put something up every week or two depending on what we have to say, either promoting work we have done or the new opportunities, or reminding the legal community of projects that are happening that might need more support. VC made a plea to the group that if they have anything that they think might be relevant to put up, short article with image, it would be good to put these up e.g. Law Centre is thinking of putting up posts about clinics.

VC – noted that JT had already suggested an item re Support Through Court.

### d. Link on other websites: BLS, BLC, CAB, Universities

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VC noted that there is a section of the website to provide links to other key resources. She will contact the Law Society; can we also link to Advice Centre?

JE agreed to follow up on this and suggested that ACVA (Advice Centre for Avon) is linked.

VC is conscious that CAB would be a good resource and is conscious that they have not been attending BPBG meetings and queried who is the relevant contact at CAB?

JE advised that the contact is Sue Evans, but she has not yet come to meetings. Jane knows her personally as well as professionally and will ask her to contact VC.

e. Database of pro bono projects – attached

VC explained that Abi Jones had sent over the list of projects that she had compiled. What is people's view on what we should do with this?

AC – had a look today and it looks like most of the ones on there are university ones (UWE / UoL)

JH noted that the key question is what sort of information would be useful / suitable from law firms?

VC noted that question and that she is keen to have a discussion on this. Clinics are useful and so if the idea is to drive people to this website then anything that brings people to the website that would be useful. Ad hoc advice that firms are giving may not have a broader use.

JH noted that it might be better just to have the clinics up there rather than just saying "we as OC / other firms do this" individual work.

VC agreed.

JH queried whether the Bristol Uni Law Clinic also a part of the BPPG?

JE confirmed that they are invited. She also advised that as part of UoB they are developing the Social Justice Hub, it might be worth engaging with them in this as well (this is now located at the Barton Hill settlement) as lots of key groups e.g. Bristol Refugee Rights have just moved there from the Malcolm X Centre.

AC queried who is fronting that from UoB?

JE it is fronted by Morag, but there are a lot of different community / voluntary sector organisations on there as well. It would be worth linking in with them.

VC confirmed that UoB is not on our membership list, and that does seem like an obvious gap.

JE agrees that they should be on the list and is not sure why they have dropped off.

VC agreed to follow up on this.

VC summed up that regarding the project list, maybe the firms can review and see if there are any clinics that are not on there.

The group agreed to do this.

## 2. Bristol Law Society pro bono rep – Jane Emanuel

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JE explained that current role at the Law Centre has shifted focus and she is now primarily responsible for fundraising and development. Her involvement in pro bono role has become less of a focus. The Law Centre's initial remit was to set up the group and then to step back and for it to be run by the firms. The legacy of this is that Law Centre is still the Bristol Law Society pro bono representative at their board meetings. However, this not appropriate anymore and Jane needs to give a new contact name to Helen Reid.

VC agreed that this was a good point and asked what the remit of the Law Society meetings is and what they discuss.

JE confirmed that the meetings centred on council business and met about 10 times a year. They are useful to tap into as there are firms that attend the Law Society meetings that do not yet attend BPBG and so it is a good opportunity to spread the word.

VC agreed that it makes more sense for Chair and Vice Chair to attend. VC will go to the first few meetings and then MB can tag in for future meetings so that they can split the responsibility.

### **3. Bristol Trustee Group seminars – flyer attached**

VC explained the background to the Bristol Trustee Group. This has just been set up by the CE group and being supported by Quarter and Voscur. Its remit is to support trustees both by giving them legal support and giving training / awareness raising to lawyers who might want to be trustees. They are planning to host four sessions between now and the end of the year. VC became involved and partnered with VVV to give trustee training. They are keen for BPBG is involved and are hoping we will be able to assist with running sessions. As such, we have given them a page on the website to show support. VC has sent around a flyer to be circulated to firms' staff and any clients that they might think be interested. It is hoped that in the new year we can give a BPBG session.

### **4. Pro Bono Week event**

#### **a. Discuss proposal – attached**

VC updated the group on the proposal (designed by Rachel Loblely).

Summary – 1 hour seminar with the aim of celebrating pro bono in Bristol and increasing profile in the city, to encourage new members, to showcase the website and to pave the way for further events down the line. Trust Law have suggested that we have an introduction and then 3 speakers e.g. firm that has a project to showcase which they accessed via Trust Law (Simmons has one read to go if required), another slot for a firm to showcase a non-Trust Law to showcase, community group, something from a university.

JE queried whether it would be possible to do something from the Law Centre. They have a lot of data now about how firms are helping with pro bono. They also get a lot of feedback from clients on the impact pro bono has on communities.

JH added that it would be good to get a university involved.

RW confirmed she can think about some of the things that they have done at UWE (that said it is son's birthday, so might be conflicted on the day itself).

AC agreed that they can find crossover students and will try to assist.

VC asked whether there is a firm that wants to showcase a project.

JH suggest that the firms go back to VC separately on that and maybe VC / group can pick one.

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## **b. Comms – mini animation?**

VC advised that she had been talking to the Simmons comms team and they have recently obtained the software to create mini animations. They have suggested using all the logos of the members of the group and then merging these into the BPBG logo. If there is appetite for this then would need permission to use the logos and become the BPBG logo to send out with the invite for the event.

The group agreed that this sounds fun and will send logos to VC to use.

## **5. New members**

### **a. Current members on email distribution**

VC shared a list of the current members of the group.

### **b. Approval process?**

VC queried (as new chair) whether there was an approvals process for new members of the group.

JE confirmed that there is no formal process.

VC raised the location of those firms who are members. There is someone in Cheltenham who would be interested in joining as there is nothing in their area. Would the group be happy with this?

DS noted that if there is nothing in the area and a lot of the projects are being run remotely anyway, this would make sense.

JE noted that there are a lot of firms that are not in Bristol who volunteer for the Law Centre (throughout Gloucestershire) as things end up at the courts here.

The group agreed that this was a sensible approach and being based in Bristol was not a pre-requisite to membership.

### **c. Disparity with CE Group members list: Clarke Willmott, Clyde & Co, DAS Legal, Foot Anstey, Gregg Latchams, Michelmores, University of Bristol**

VC noted that she has a relatively up-to-date list from CE group and will be reaching out to them and see why they are not with us and whether they group send someone along. She asked for the group's views on inviting in-house lawyers and smaller firms that might have the skillsets e.g. family, immigration?

The group agreed that we should be inclusive.

JE advised that in the initial stages she did invite smaller firms initially e.g. Barcan & Kirby, Watkins, but it was a question of resourcing issues.

VC advised that she has spoken to Helen Reid (Bristol Law Society) and she is very supportive of advertising our events, happy to circulate to firms who are not yet members to become them.

JH noted that in-house lawyers may be a bit more pressured to find pro bono activities and are likely to welcome being part of the group.

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JE suggested that another way of looking at it is that various in-house firms have been available to help with employment tribunal (ELIT) work and have volunteered for that.

VC the main question is how to reach out to them.

MB noted that hopefully the pro bono week event should also help with reaching out to other smaller firms.

JE advised that St John's and Guildhall chambers were also initially involved, and it would be worth reaching out to them to see.

**d. New requests: LawWorks, Charles Russell Speechlys (Cheltenham), Evi Economou (Bristol Law Centre), Bristol Law Society, CAB**

See above.

**e. Increase membership of smaller local firms / in-house lawyers / the bar?**

See above.

## **6. Regional pro bono groups: North, Birmingham**

VC reported to the group that she has been speaking to representative at DLA Piper who has set up a Northern pro bono group and she has also been in discussions with the Birmingham group. She has agreed that checking in with each other on a bi-annual basis would be useful so that we are more linked up nationally. It also gives us an opportunity to feed into the Collaborative Plan in London to have a voice in London.

DP asked if VC can circulate the details of the groups so that firms can check whether their colleagues in other offices are engaged.

## **7. Remit of CE Group / BPBG**

VC reported that she has had a chat with Peter Morris, Jon Manley and Helen Reid to find out more about the goals for the CE group. They have reassured VC that they were focussed on CE / fundraising and not legal pro bono, although there is some overlap (e.g. the Trustee Group). The lines of communication are now open between the groups. They discussed Bristol City Funds and the Asking Bristol – which both have a legal pro bono element but are currently more engaged with the CE group. VC reported that they have all agreed that they are happy to funnel those opportunities through BPBG. There does seem to be a bit of confusion in Bristol over whether the term “pro bono” is just legal advice or general commercial advice, but we are now working together.

JE queried whether they have they confirmed whether they have now appointed the Pro Bono Coordinator at Quartet.

VC confirmed that they have, and that VC has a call booked with them next week to discuss what their role is and what their plans are.

## **8. AOB**

JE gave an update on the current demand for legal advice. Inevitably employment advice is through the roof the Law Centre is struggling to cope with the demand already and is desperately trying to find funding for this. They are seeing a change in the cohort of people coming in – there are a lot more younger people (25 to 35) who have never thought they would seek advice before. This will be the same with homeless

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advice once the eviction moratorium ends, especially in the private rental sector. More people can help themselves if they know what to do as they tend to be, or have been, in work are tech savvy and are able to do things themselves if needed. Telephone advice work is working well for them as well. The government has put in a lot of money for now (MOJ / Lottery) and the trusts and foundations are fine until March 2021. But in March 2021 there will be a large hole as budgets for the next financial year are drawn up and this is likely to be the same time as things are reaching tribunals. There is also a real hole in family law advice – domestic violence as well as general family issues / advice.

VC wondered if we should put something on our blog post about that, maybe we can put something about this on the website and get the message out there.

RW confirmed that they are intending to start offering appointments from November (delayed due to the delayed start of term). Is there any advice about how to get to people?

JE confirmed that for UWE she would advise discussing things with the North Bristol Advice Trust as they are in a similar location.

RW queried whether it would be a concern that all projects are virtual atm.

JE advised that this is also the case with the Law Centre and shouldn't be an impediment.

MB queried whether there is a conversation that needs to be had about how to help the Law Centre with fundraising?

JE confirmed that there certainly will be. All agencies are anticipating that the tanking economy will have a huge impact. There should be a lot that could happen in the new year.

JT also updated the group that Support Through Court opened its face to face service in August (only by appointment) and encouraged people to refer to them if needed. He also updated that the Legal Walk is happening virtually this year.

MB noted that we haven't seen the advertising for this yet.

JT / JE confirmed that the local legal support trusts have been merged into the Access to Justice Foundation who is co-ordinating these centrally now, so with the change and Covid the messages might not have gone out. He has seen a flyer and will send this around to the group.

VC queried whether this was on the CE group's radar and noted that it might be worth sending a one-liner to the CE group so that they have been flagged up to them.

JT agreed to send the details he has received to be forwarded to the group

VC updated the group that Sarah Philimore is keen to get the Twitter page up and running. VC is also conscious that there is a LinkedIn page that may need resurrecting and confirmed that she is looking at this.

**Next meeting – 20 October (6 weeks in order to get the event pushed).**