

advocate



Finding free legal help
from barristers

Bar Pro Bono Unit

(A company limited by guarantee)

ANNUAL REPORT AND FINANCIAL STATEMENTS

YEAR ENDED 31 MARCH 2021

Charity no: 1057620
Company no: 3237309

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REPORT OF THE TRUSTEES

YEAR ENDED 31 MARCH 2021

OBJECTIVES

Advocate is established to provide legal advice and representation in relation to the prosecution and defence of actions before the Courts and Tribunals of England and Wales, the European Court of Justice and the European Court of Human Rights to persons who by reason of their inadequate means are unable to obtain such advice and representation from their own resources.

PROGRESS AND ACHIEVEMENTS

Advocate was established in May 1996 with the aims of establishing a panel of barristers willing to advise and represent persons without means and unable to obtain legal aid involved in matters on a pro bono basis and informing legal and advice services of the assistance available.

By 31 March 2021, the panel comprised of 4,390 barristers willing to work free of charge in suitable cases for at least three days each year. To this pre-volunteered resource can be added barristers not on the panel but who nonetheless respond to a request from Advocate to assist in a particular case.

This year saw a remarkable change in the way we work as a result of the pandemic, transforming our service in a matter of weeks from paper-based to digital. Not only did this allow our team and our volunteers to work remotely but, crucially, enabled members of the public to continue to access our services.

Casework remained busy as demand for pro bono services from members of the public increased dramatically and our team and our volunteer barristers worked harder than ever to provide much needed advice, drafting and representation. The last three months (January – March 2021) were particularly busy as demand for pro bono help continued to increase arising from the impact of the pandemic, particularly noticeable in employment law. We experienced a 46% rise in new applications with 810 cases (300 in March alone).

The readiness of barristers to step forward during the pandemic was deeply impressive, balancing a dedicated practice with making a significant contribution to the community and over the 12 months, 364 new volunteers signed up. The use of remote hearings increased our ability to find barristers to provide representation, enabling us to match people in need of help with barristers all around the country. The top two areas of law continue to be Family and Employment and we continue to support schemes involving barristers (such as CLIPS and Pro Bono Connect) and a number of other COVID initiatives including:

- Zimran Samuel (Doughty Street) and his work on cases of domestic violence
- Garden Court providing advice to key workers
- Clerksroom offering free advice to those affected by Covid-19
- Initiating the Legal and Advice Sector Roundtable

- Participating in The Master of the Rolls' cross-sector working group to address concerns about the consequences of the end of the stay on housing possession claims.

Our applicants have struggled with a contrast in fortune. Some applicants are having to wait nearly a year for hearings to be listed whilst others are being informed of hearings at very short notice. Both present difficulties in our ability to place their case. The development of a new online application form in the wake of the pandemic made it easier for people to access our services remotely and removed the need for them to visit an advice agency to act as a referrer. This not only helped people who were shielding but also those in areas where face to face advice services had closed. Unfortunately, without the initial advice from a front-line agency, the knock-on effect is that applications now often have limited supporting documents and as a result we need to handhold applicants through our process.

OUTLOOK

2021 is Advocate's 25th anniversary and an opportunity to celebrate 25 years of pro bono by the Bar through Advocate and beyond. As part of our work, we are launching three new initiatives:

1. Young Bar Advocate – created by young barristers, for young barristers

We are forming a network of likeminded individuals, across all sectors of the Bar, to support them through their careers to take on pro bono work. We know that Covid has changed many career plans for young barristers and made it harder to take on pro bono cases. Advocate wants to ensure that the young barristers signed up to volunteer with us, who recognise the necessity for access to justice and want to help, feel supported to take on pro bono work, while also building their own successful careers.

2. Collaborate – Case-based guidance when working on a pro bono case

After what has been a challenging year, Advocate wants to ensure that all junior barristers are adequately supported when working on pro bono cases. Junior barristers will be able to receive case-based help and support from a senior barrister also volunteering for Advocate.

3. 25 for 25: The Pro Bono Challenge

We are encouraging barristers to sign up to complete 25 hours of pro bono for our 25th anniversary. The campaign will launch in Volunteers' Week in June 2021 and run until Volunteers' Week in June 2022.

The panel of volunteer barristers continues to grow with the addition of new junior barristers. Work is being continued, in collaboration with LawWorks, to increase links with solicitors willing to work pro bono through the Pro Bono Connect scheme, as well as developing access to Advocate's services across England and Wales.

A fundraising strategy is in place to try to secure and sustain a higher level of funding from donations and other sources. Advocate is hugely grateful to all who support it financially, including the General

Council of the Bar and the Inns of Court and many individuals and chambers within the profession. Advocate is investing in improved processes to enable applications for help to be made and administered online, increasing the efficiency of the organisation so that more help can be facilitated.

PUBLIC BENEFIT

Advocate's work is of public benefit in that, in a time of increased need due to economic conditions, and reduced access to legal aid, the number of those needing its help in order to obtain some degree of access to the legal system has increased. When planning the Charity's activities consideration has been given to the Charity Commission's guidance on public benefit.

CONNECTED ORGANISATIONS

There is an overlap of Trustees and Directors between Advocate and Bar in the Community (Charity no. 1089907, Company no. 4211688). The Chair of Trustees is a trustee of the National Pro Bono Centre (a registered charity 1137708 and a company limited by guarantee 7226359) of which Advocate is a member and whose premises Advocate occupied with others during some of this accounting period.

POLICIES

Reserves. Advocate seeks to retain a reserve that will allow for modest contingencies, and provide for a minimum of three months of reserves.

Investments. Advocate's Trustees review its arrangements for holding funds from time to time, and adopt a cautious approach to investment.

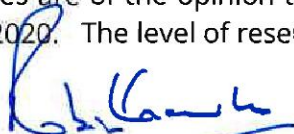
RISK MANAGEMENT

The Trustees review areas of risk periodically at its regular meetings. The review assesses the major risks to which the charity is exposed, in particular those related to operation and finances. The Trustees are satisfied that, where appropriate, systems are in place to mitigate exposure to major risks.

The risk of losing funding is addressed by seeking to diversify fundraising approaches and maintaining a good relationship with key funders. Internal control risks are minimised by the procedures in place for the authorisation of expenditure and commitments. Risks presented by cases in which Advocate arranges assistance are subject to reporting lines to the Chief Executive and ultimately to the Chair.

FINANCIAL STATEMENTS

The attached financial statements show the state of Advocate's finances as at 31 March 2021. The Trustees are of the opinion that the state of Advocate's finances is no less sound than it was at 31 March 2020. The level of reserves is within the agreed policy.



On behalf of the Trustees
Sir Robin Knowles CBE – Chair

**INDEPENDENT EXAMINER'S REPORT
TO THE TRUSTEES OF BAR PRO BONO UNIT**

I report on the accounts for the year ended 31 March 2021, which are set out on pages 9 to 17.

Respective responsibilities of trustees and reporting accountant

The trustees (who are also the directors of the company for the purposes of company law) are responsible for the preparation of the accounts in accordance with the requirements of the Companies Act 2006 ("the 2006 Act").

The charity's trustees consider that an audit is not required for this year under Part 16 of the 2006 Act and that an independent examination is needed. The charity's gross income exceeded £250,000 and I am qualified to undertake the examination by being a qualified accountant.

It is my responsibility to:

- examine the accounts under section 145 of the Charities Act,
- to follow the procedures laid down in the general Directions given by the Charity Commission (under section 145(5)(b) of the Charities Act, and
- to state whether particular matters have come to my attention.

Basis of independent examiner's statement

My examination was carried out in accordance with general Directions given by the Charity Commission. An examination includes a review of the accounting records kept by the charity and a comparison of the accounts presented with those records. It also includes consideration of any unusual items or disclosures in the accounts, and seeking explanations from the trustees concerning any such matters. The procedures undertaken do not provide all the evidence that would be required in an audit, and consequently no opinion is given as to whether the accounts present a 'true and fair' view and the report is limited to those matters set out in the statement below.

Independent examiner's statement

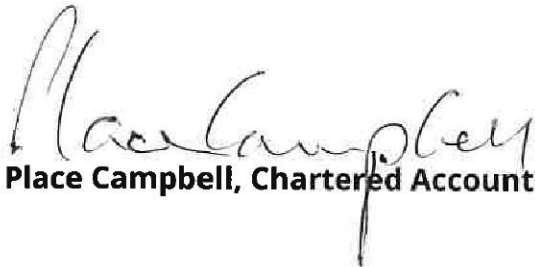
In connection with my examination, no material matters have come to my attention which gives me cause to believe that in, any material respect:

- accounting records were not kept in accordance with section 386 of the Companies Act 2006; or
- the accounts do not accord with such records; or
- the accounts do not comply with relevant accounting requirements under section 396 of the Companies Act 2006 other than any requirement that the accounts give a 'true and fair' view which is not a matter considered as part of an independent examination; or
- the accounts have not been prepared in accordance with the Charities SORP (FRS102).

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advocate
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I have no concerns and have come across no other matters in connection with the examination to which attention should be drawn in this report in order to enable a proper understanding of the accounts to be reached.


Place Campbell, Chartered Accountant

Date 26/11/2024

	Unrestricted Funds Year To <u>31/03/2021</u>	Restricted Funds Year To <u>31/03/2021</u>	Total Funds Year To <u>31/03/2021</u>	Total Funds Year To <u>31/03/2020</u>
Notes	£	£	£	£

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**BALANCE SHEET
AS AT 31 MARCH 2021**

	<u>Notes</u>	<u>£</u>	<u>31/03/2021</u> <u>£</u>	<u>£</u>	<u>31/03/2020</u> <u>£</u>
FIXED ASSETS					
Tangible assets	3		3,780		677
CURRENT ASSETS					
Debtors	4	70,944		61,185	
Cash at bank and in hand		530,787		266,046	
TOTAL CURRENT ASSETS		<u>601,731</u>		<u>327,231</u>	
CURRENT LIABILITIES					
Creditors	5	<u>39,233</u>		<u>64,571</u>	
NET CURRENT ASSETS			<u>562,498</u>		<u>262,660</u>
TOTAL NET ASSETS			<u>566,278</u>		<u>263,337</u>
REPRESENTED BY: FUNDS OF THE CHARITY					
Restricted Funds	9		4,312		-
Unrestricted Funds	8		<u>561,966</u>		<u>263,337</u>

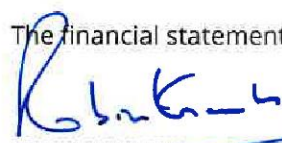
Audit Exemption Statement

For the year ending 31 March 2021 the company was entitled to exemption from audit under section 477 of the Companies Act 2006 relating to small companies. The members have not required the company to obtain an audit of its financial statements for the year ended 31 March 2020 in accordance with section 476 of the Companies Act 2006.

Directors' responsibilities:

- the directors acknowledge their responsibilities for complying with the requirements of the Act with respect to accounting records and the preparation of accounts
- these accounts have been prepared in accordance with the provisions applicable to companies subject to the small companies' regime.

The financial statements were approved by the Board on and signed on its behalf by:



Sir Robin Knowles CBE, Chair

CASHFLOW STATEMENT

For the year ended 31 March 2021

	Year To 31/03/2021 £	Year To 31/03/2020 £
CASH FLOWS FROM OPERATING ACTIVITIES		
Net cash generated in operating activities	269,781	78,350
CASH FLOWS FROM INVESTING ACTIVITIES		
Purchase of fixed assets	(5,040)	-
Net cash used in investing activities	264,741	78,350
CASH FLOWS FROM FINANCING ACTIVITIES	-	-
Increase in cash and cash equivalents in the year	264,741	78,350
Cash and cash equivalents at the beginning of the year	266,046	187,696
Total Cash and cash equivalents at the end of the year	530,787	266,046

RECONCILIATION OF NET MOVEMENT OF FUNDS

Net movement of funds	302,941	34,039
Add back depreciation charge	1,937	1,819
(Increase) / Decrease in debtors	(9,759)	28,592
(Decrease)/ increase in creditors	(25,338)	13,900
Net cash used in operating activities	£ 269,781	£ 78,350

NOTES TO THE FINANCIAL STATEMENTS
YEAR ENDED 31 MARCH 2021

1 ACCOUNTING POLICIES

(a) The financial statements have been prepared under the historical cost convention and to comply with the Companies Act 2006 and in accordance with Accounting and Reporting by Charities: Statement of Recommended Practice applicable to charities preparing their accounts in accordance with the Financial Reporting Standard applicable in the UK and Republic of Ireland (FRS102) (effective 1 January 2015) – (Charities SORP (FRS102)) and the Financial Reporting Standard applicable in the UK and Republic of Ireland (FRS102).

(b) All income received by Advocate is available for its general purposes, unless otherwise stated. Income is included in full in the Statement of Financial Activities when receivable. The Trustees and the barristers who provide legal advice and representations to persons whose cases are accepted by Advocate, provide all of their services free of charge without receiving any benefit. Place Campbell review these accounts and provide payroll services at no charge. The value of these services has not been included in the financial statements.

(c) Resources expended are recognised in the period in which they are incurred.

(d) Depreciation is provided at rates calculated to write off the cost of each asset over its expected useful life, which in the case of office equipment is estimated to be 4 years. Leasehold improvements are written off over the life of the lease.

2 EXPENDITURE

	Cost of generating funds	Charitable activities	Year to 31/3/21 Total	Period to 31/3/20 Total
	£	£	£	£
Staff costs	49,242	436,924	486,166	484,666
Accommodation	711	25,732	26,443	176,800
Travel and training	41	1,607	1,648	14,339
Publicity and stationery	69	2,697	2,766	829
Postage	-	-	-	57
Fundraising activities	9,378	-	9,378	8,308
IT	687	25,045	25,732	13,817
Sundry	222	8,647	8,870	5,795
Depreciation and Amortisation	37	1,438	1,475	1,819
	60,387	502,090	562,478	706,420

NOTES TO THE FINANCIAL STATEMENTS

YEAR ENDED 31 MARCH 2021

The Trustees have carried out an apportionment of management and administration costs, as appropriate between Advocate and its related charity, Bar in the Community.

Staff Costs	Year to 31/3/2021	Period to 31/3/2020
	£	£
Staff salaries	420,287	425,134
Social Security costs	40,370	37,280
Temporary agency staff	512	2,052
Recruitment	2,400	10,883
Pension costs	22,597	15,567
	<hr/>	<hr/>
Total	486,166	490,916
	<hr/>	<hr/>
Average Employees	15	16
	<hr/>	<hr/>
Total cost of Key Management Personnel	124,100	132,591
	<hr/>	<hr/>

One employee was paid at a rate between £70,000 - £79,999 per annum during the year ended 31 March 2021 (2020: 0). The Key Management Personnel of the Charity are the Chief Executive and Head of Casework.

The charity operates a defined benefit group personal pension plan with Aviva for staff. The costs relating to this scheme are shown above.

3 TANGIBLE FIXED ASSETS

	Office Equipment £
Cost	
At 1 March 2020	31,830
Additions	5,040
Disposals	-
At 31 March 2021	<hr/> 36,870
Depreciation	
At 1 April 2020	31,153
Depreciation charge	1,937
Disposals	-
At 31 March 2021	<hr/> 33,090
Net Book Value at 31 March 2021	<hr/> 3,780
Net Book Value at 31 March 2020	<hr/> 677

NOTES TO THE FINANCIAL STATEMENTS
YEAR ENDED 31 MARCH 2021

4 DEBTORS	<u>31/3/2021</u>	<u>31/3/2020</u>
	£	£
Tax recoverable	9,217	8,097
Funding due	43,311	48,393
Other Debtors	-	697
Prepayments	18,416	3,999
	70,944	61,185

5 CREDITORS	<u>31/3/2021</u>	<u>31/3/2020</u>
	£	£
Taxation payable - PAYE	11,105	8,452
Defined Benefit Pension Scheme contributions	4,309	4,297
Funding received in advance	18,275	18,275
Trade Creditors	5,295	33,547
Other Creditors	250	-
	39,234	64,571

6 STATEMENT OF FUNDS

	Unrestricted Funds	Restricted Funds	Total
	£	£	£
Fixed assets	3,780	-	3,780
Net current assets	558,435	4,312	562,747
	562,215	4,312	566,527

7 TRUSTEE REMUNERATION	<u>31/3/2021</u>	<u>31/3/2020</u>
	£	£
Trustee Remuneration, Benefits and Expenses	-	-

NOTES TO THE FINANCIAL STATEMENTS
YEAR ENDED 31 MARCH 2021

8 UNRESTRICTED FUNDS	<u>31/3/2021</u>	<u>31/3/2020</u>
	£	£
General unrestricted fund		
Balance at 1 April 2020	263,337	229,304
Income	779,272	666,268
Expenditure	(480,643)	(632,235)
	<hr/>	<hr/>
Balance at 31 March 2021	<u>561,966</u>	<u>263,337</u>

The general unrestricted fund represents funds which are expendable at the discretion of the Trustees in the furtherance of the objects of the Charity.

9 RESTRICTED FUNDS	<u>31/3/2021</u>	<u>31/3/2020</u>
	£	£
Strategic Project Fund		
Legal Education Foundation	24,275	15,750
Access to Justice Foundation	-	6,307
Other grants	5,000	-
Expenditure	(29,275)	(22,057)
	<hr/>	<hr/>
Balance at 31 March 2021	<u>-</u>	<u>-</u>

The Strategic Project grants fund work on the design and implementation of new systems to increase the efficiency of processing applications and to review the branding of the charity.

Volunteer Management Fund	<u>31/3/2021</u>	<u>31/3/2020</u>
	£	£
Grant received	35,860	10,884
Expenditure	(31,548)	(10,884)
	<hr/>	<hr/>
Balance at 31 March 2021	<u>4,312</u>	<u>-</u>

Therium access have provided funding for the charity's volunteer management role.

NOTES TO THE FINANCIAL STATEMENTS
YEAR ENDED 31 MARCH 2021

Justice First Fellowship Fund	<u>31/3/2021</u>	<u>31/3/2020</u>
	£	£
Grant received	21,012	41,244
Expenditure	(21,012)	(41,244)
	<hr/>	<hr/>
Balance at 31 March 2021	<hr/> - <hr/>	<hr/> - <hr/>

The Legal Education Foundation have provided grants under the Justice First Fellowship Scheme to fund one caseworker. The grants are paid quarterly and match the costs of the roles together with a contribution to supervision costs.

10 TRANSACTIONS WITH RELATED PARTIES

Sir Robin Knowles CBE (Trustee) is a Trustee of the National Pro Bono Centre which provides accommodation, accounting support and other services to Advocate. The National Pro Bono Centre is a registered charity number 1137708 and company limited by guarantee number 7226359. The licence fees paid to the National Pro Bono Centre, including irrecoverable VAT were £22,534 in the year ended 31 March 2021 (2020 £176,800).

NOTES TO THE FINANCIAL STATEMENTS
YEAR ENDED 31 MARCH 2021

11 COMPARATIVE FIGURES FOR THE STATEMENT OF FINANCIAL ACTIVITIES

		Unrestricted Funds Year To 31/3/2020	Restricted Funds Year To 31/3/2020	Total Funds Year To 31/3/2020
	Notes	£	£	£
Income from				
Donations - core funders		143,100	-	143,100
Donations		484,653	74,185	558,838
Other income		185	-	185
Events		37,045		37,045
Investment income		1,285	-	1,285
Total Income		666,268	74,185	740,453
Expenditure on				
Raising funds	2	62,829	-	62,829
Charitable Activities	2	569,406	74,185	643,591
Total Expenditure		632,235	74,185	706,420
Net Income		34,039	-	34,039
Total Funds at 1 April 2019		229,304	-	229,304
Total Funds at 31 March 2020		263,337	-	263,337

LEGAL AND ADMINISTRATIVE INFORMATION

Status

The Bar Pro Bono Unit is a charitable company limited by guarantee, incorporated on 13 August 1996. The members, who are the Trustees, have undertaken to contribute, to the extent set out in the Memorandum of Association, to the assets of Advocate in the event of it being wound up.

Trustees and directors

The Trustees of the Unit as at 31 March 2021 were:

Sir Robin Knowles CBE – Chair
Philip Brook Smith QC
Theo Huckle QC
Andrew Hillier QC
Conall Patton QC
Sharif Shivji QC

Jane Rayson
Chris Broom
Nick Hanning
Diane Sechi
Eleanor Holland

Appointment of Trustees

New Trustees are appointed in an open process by the current Trustees, after consultation with the Chairman of the Bar Council of England and Wales, in accordance with the Articles of Association of the company. New Trustees are provided with background information, including the constitutional documents of the charity, and meet staff to be shown the work of the charity.

Company Secretary

Shyam Popat

Registered Office

Advocate DX
50-52 Chancery Lane
London
WC2A 1HL

Reporting Accountant

Place Campbell
Chartered Accountants
Wilmington House, High Street
East Grinstead, West Sussex
RH19 3AU

Bankers

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Holborn Circus Branch
31 Holborn
London EC1N 2HR