



Voluntary Assistance Scheme

of The Bar Council of Ireland

VAS is operated by the Bar Council of Ireland and accepts requests for legal assistance from NGOs, civic society organisations and charities acting on behalf of individuals who are having difficulty accessing justice. Please contact us for further details or see the LawLibrary website under 'Bar Council and You'.

VAS have had a very busy start to 2014 with a number of important cases ongoing. We also have a number of new organisations on board who we look forward to being of assistance to in the future. These include Ana Liffey Drug Project, Merchants Quay Ireland Homeless and Drug Services and Irish Mortgage Holders Association.

Recent cases

Late last year, AdVic (who assist families who have lost loved ones due to homicide) approached VAS seeking our assistance in advising a family whose daughter had tragically been murdered. In January, Libby Charleton BL met with the family and talked them through what to expect from the forthcoming Central Criminal Court trial and helped them to understand the processes around criminal justice proceedings.

On 13 March, Ronan Lupton BL delivered an informative presentation on data protection to members of charitable organisations in the Carmichael Centre, a support organisation for voluntary and charitable organisations. The Carmichael Centre is an exceptional resource for volunteering groups and VAS are delighted to be associated with them.

We have had a number of requests for assistance from National Advocacy Services providing legal opinions to vulnerable adults at the request of their advocate. David Dodd BL and Mema Byrne BL are acting in two such cases at present.

VAS and Travellers

We have had a number of cases in recent months in relation to travellers and discrimination. The Irish Traveller Movement

requested VAS involvement in a case in Kerry. In January, Aoife Lynch BL represented two traveller women who brought proceedings against a Killarney nightclub. The ladies had purchased tickets for an Aware fundraiser, having lost a number of family members to suicide, but were refused entry. They were awarded €1,000 each in compensation.

On 19 February, Eoghan Foley BL and Keith Walsh Solicitors successfully brought discrimination proceedings on behalf of two travellers against a Dublin 7 pub. The men were awarded €500 each.

In November 2010, the Irish Traveller Movement sought assistance from VAS in a case before the Equality Tribunal claiming that the admission procedures of a school in Clonmel were discriminatory. The complaint was upheld, but has since been appealed and has ultimately made its way to the Supreme Court where the appeal was part heard in January. Vivian Meacham BL and Cormac O'Dulachain SC are acting for the claimants, Mary Stokes and her son John. It is hoped there will be a judgment in the matter later this year.

Debt Proceedings

VAS are providing assistance to clients of MABS in numerous cases where proceedings are ongoing in relation to debt and repossession orders. We have also taken on a number of debt related proceedings from Irish Mortgage Holders Organisation, in cases where unique legal issues arise.

Get Involved

VAS are hugely enthused by the numbers of barristers who have made contact to offer their services to VAS in recent months. VAS continue to provide help to NGOs and their clients on an advisory basis. If you would like to get involved, please get in touch with us by contacting either Diane Duggan at dduggan@lawlibrary.ie or Jeanne McDonagh at jmcdonagh@lawlibrary.ie. ■