

In the interests of justice

The Bar of Ireland Voluntary Assistance Scheme (VAS) is operated by Council of The Bar 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 Law Library website under 'Legal Services'.

Speaking for Ourselves – advocacy workshop

On Thursday, November 12, VAS hosted its second advocacy training workshop for charities. The aim was to assist charities in the process of making presentations and submissions, writing letters and generally advocating more effectively to achieve their aims. We had attendees from the Immigrant Council, Focus Ireland, the Society of Saint Vincent de Paul, Community Law and Mediation, the Migrant Rights Centre of Ireland, Dublin City Volunteer Centre, Enable Ireland, the National Advocacy Service for People with Disabilities, Robert Emmett Community Development Project and Plan International. The programme was comprised of four presentations and a practical exercise, which had been well received at the first workshop: 'Preparation for Advocacy', delivered by Michael Cush SC; 'Oral Advocacy', delivered by Mary Rose Gearty SC; 'Written Advocacy', delivered by Bairbre O'Neill BL; and, 'Principled Negotiation', delivered by Turlough O'Donnell SC. Michael Lynn SC and Aoife Carroll BL prepared a practical exercise. In addition to these presentations from The Bar, we invited two speakers from the Oireachtas to give a presentation on 'Effective Engagement with Public Bodies'. Alan Guidon (Clerk of the Joint Committee on Justice, Defence and Equality) and Brid Dunne (Clerk of the Joint Committee on European Union Affairs and Clerk to the Committee on Members' Interests) gave this presentation.

VAS is grateful to the speakers and presenters who were so generous with their time. It is hoped to run this workshop once again in early 2016. If you know of any charities who would be interested in attending, please ask them to contact vas@lawlibrary.ie for further information.

Once again, feedback on this workshop was very positive:

"I have done this type of training previously but it has been from the private sector, and it has a business slant to it so it is very hard to transfer the skills, but I found this so useful and so transferable. It was so clear, so focused. Honesty and integrity were mentioned time and time again, which is great to hear in our sector."

"Very well done and executed professionally."



Pictured at the recent VAS advocacy workshop were (from left): Miriam Lewis, Dublin City volunteer; David Barniville SC, Chairman, Council of The Bar of Ireland; and, Diane Duggan BL, VAS Co-ordinator.

"This was one of the most worthwhile and engaging training events/workshops I have ever attended. I would highly recommend it to others."

Requests for assistance

VAS has recently received requests for assistance from a number of organisations, including Transparency Ireland, Mental Health Reform, the National Advocacy Service, Le Cheile Youth Justice and Mentoring Programme, Dublin Aids Alliance and a housing co-operative in Ballymun. At the request of VAS, Arthur Cox Solicitors and Niall Handy BL helped to negotiate a successful agreement between the housing co-operative (whose members would not otherwise have had access to legal services) and Dublin City Council.

Please contact vas@lawlibrary.ie if you are interested in getting involved.