

Free Legal Advice Panel

Context

Communities across Ireland have responded in extraordinary ways to the situations in Afghanistan and Ukraine to open their homes and welcome refugees as they arrive and integrate into new lives in Ireland.

Challenge

Due to the complexity and variety of needs, as well as the number of supports and services that hosts are helping refugees to navigate, the need for expert legal advice and guidance may arise.

Solution

The Open Community has established a dedicated panel of expert legal firms available to offer pro bono advice to hosts, community support groups and resettled families or individuals on a referral basis.

What is the purpose of the legal panel?

The Legal Panel provides a highly valuable resource and essential safeguard to hosts, community support group and resettled families or individuals. As hosts and community support groups help to welcome and integrate refugees they may encounter issues that would require legal advice and guidance. The Legal Advice Panel is composed of 4 leading Irish law firms who are available to offer pro bono legal advice on a referral basis as needs arise.

The Legal Advice Panel is coordinated in partnership with the Public Interest Law Alliance (PILA) who facilitate the placing of legal requests. PILA are not responsible for the quality or delivery of the legal advice or representation offer by the respective firms. Each firm will assume a solicitor/client relationship with the host, community support group or family/individuals. The legal firms that comprise the panel include:

- Mason, Hayes and Curran
- Arthur Cox
- A&L Goodbody
- Matheson

What are the legal needs that can be addressed by the panel?

Examples of advice include areas such as: housing rights, social welfare, family law, immigration, and employment rights. Please note however that these examples are non-exhaustive as the legal needs that arise are likely to be varied and dependent on specific circumstances and individual need.

How can a referral/request for advice be submitted to the panel by a host or community support group?

Hosts or community support groups should complete the Referral Form available on The Open Community website and submit it via email to: info@theopencommunity.ie. The Referral Form asks for the legal need to be outlined and for details of the activities or efforts that have been undertaken already to address the identified issue. The Referral Form will be provided to The Public Interest Law Alliance (PILA) who will assess each request and, where a legitimate legal need is found, will identify the most appropriate legal firm based on their areas of expertise to provide advice.

How can a referral/request for advice be submitted to the panel by refugees?

A refugee family or individual can complete and submit the Referral Form directly to The Open Community via email to: info@theopencommunity.ie. The Referral Form will be provided to PILA who will assess the request and identify the most appropriate legal firm to provide legal advice to the family or individuals.

How is information shared?

By submitting a referral you authorise The Open Community to share information, for the purposes of facilitating a legal referral, including personal information and all other information provided in the Referral Form, to the Public Interest Law Alliance (PILA); and, at the discretion of PILA, to a legal firm, who is a member of the Legal Advice Panel, for the purposes of an onward legal referral.

What happens if the Referral Form is not approved?

Every effort will be made to accommodate each referral received but please be aware that this may not always be possible. A decision will be communicated to the named person on the Referral Form as soon as possible. The Open Community will not be responsible for sourcing alternative legal assistance if referral forms are not approved.