

31 March 2010

Attorney General hails law student for winning article on pro bono costs orders

Baroness Scotland QC yesterday presented the inaugural *Access to Justice Foundation Student Prize* to George Gordon of BBP Law School, for his article addressing the question “Pro Bono Costs Orders: levelling the playing field?”.

Speaking at the LawWorks awards, the Attorney General said “We need more practitioners and more judges to be aware that in appropriate cases they can, and should, apply for or make pro bono costs orders under section 194 of the Legal Services Act 2007. The essay prize is both a debate of these orders and of course, yet another way of raising awareness of what is an important development in pro bono in recent years.”

The essay competition was adjudicated by the Trustees of the Foundation, the principal judges being former President of the Law Society Andrew Holroyd CBE and former Chairman of the Bar Sir Stephen Irwin. Both judges commended the winning entry as “an engaging, thoughtful, and well expressed piece on the issue of pro bono costs.”

BVC student George Gordon said “I am very grateful to the Foundation for its student prize. I hope lawyers realise that having secured a Pro Bono Costs Order they are able to influence how the funds are distributed to support future pro bono projects.”

Also presented yesterday were Commendations to Emma Boffey, LLB student at the University of Strathclyde, and Gillian Clissold, BVC student at Cardiff Law School, for their articles submitted to the competition.

Chair of the Foundation, former Attorney General Lord Goldsmith QC, commented that “Pro Bono Costs Orders help create a level playing field, allowing costs to be ordered against the unsuccessful party even where the successful party was assisted pro bono. In addition these orders produce new money to support the provision of free legal help to others in the future.”

The competition was organised in collaboration with LawWorks, the Solicitors Pro Bono Group, and was sponsored by LexisNexis who provided £300 of book vouchers for the winning prize. The winning article will be published in the New Law Journal during April.

Notes

1. The Access to Justice Foundation is a registered national charity, chaired by Lord Goldsmith QC, with trustees drawn from across the legal profession and advice sector, reflecting the cross-profession nature of the initiative.
2. The Foundation is the statutory recipient of “pro bono costs orders” under Section 194 of the Legal Services Act 2007. This new costs jurisdiction, introduced in October 2008, enables civil courts in England & Wales to require a party who loses to someone represented pro bono to pay the equivalent of legal costs to the Foundation. The charity then uses this form of “new money” to strategically support pro bono organisations that provide access to justice to those in need.
3. For more information contact enquiries@atjf.org.uk or visit www.accesstojusticefoundation.org.uk. Press and media may telephone 020 7320 5902.
4. For details of the LawWorks student awards visit www.lawworks.org.uk/?id=student-awards-2010.