

A message from Nick Gallagher, CEO

Across all our sites and beyond, the need for a PSU volunteer remains huge for people who are facing court alone. In just the first three months of this financial year, we helped as many times as in the whole of 2012/13, just before changes to Legal Aid came into effect.

With your help, we continue to try to address this growing need. We have increased the number of our skilled and dedicated volunteers and expanded the number of sites at which we operate. This means we are now able to help more people than ever before.

We have just appointed a Coordinator for new services in Bournemouth and Southampton. In the late summer we will open a PSU at the West London Family Court. In September we will begin piloting a part time service in Newport, managed from Cardiff, and later this year we are looking to open PSUs in Hull and Coventry.

An example of how we help is contained in Josh's story overleaf. Support for those alone in court is our main aim, but there are other benefits that we bring to the court system. Our presence in the court building means we can take pressure off stretched court staff. Our work with clients before and during hearings is designed to make the process run more smoothly for all, including the judiciary. Alongside Josh's story you will also be able to read the thoughts of HH Judge Laura Harris about the benefits the involvement of PSU volunteers bring.

I hope both pieces give you a useful glimpse into the vital help your support allows.

Yours sincerely



Nick Gallagher
CEO



Join us for our

2016 Annual Reception



Tuesday 25th October, 6-9pm

In the Parliament Chambers of the Honourable Society of Middle Temple.

Register online: www.thepsu.org/events

Our upcoming events from around the country

Visit: www.thepsu.org/events

Contact: events@thepsu.org.uk

Skydive, multiple dates

Dive face first into one of the most exhilarating sports imaginable, free-falling 10,000 feet into an experience like no other.

Challenge Everest, 25th November 2016

We're challenging teams in Sheffield and Cardiff to climb the equivalent heights of Everest. Think you've got what it takes?

Tough Mudder, multiple dates

Test your toughness and take on the gauntlet of muddy obstacles. Have a great time and an even greater workout, all in the name of charity.

London to Amsterdam cycle, 31st May - 4th June 2017

Cycle through beautiful English villages and on into mainland Europe, passing through historic Bruges and Breda before finishing in any cyclist's dream city, Amsterdam.



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Josh's story

I came to the PSU when I was dealing with a case involving my daughter, Emily*. Her mother and I are separated and she wanted to take Emily to go and live with her new boyfriend. This meant Emily would have had to move homes and school, something she didn't want to do.

Instead, she asked to come and live with me. After her mother refused, I applied for a Variation to Contact Order regarding Emily's living and school situation. It was when I was in the court collecting the forms that I first saw posters for the PSU and I thought they might be able to help.

"The volunteers often went the extra mile and fulfilled everything they said they would"

Over the past six months I have been in court at least once a month and I must have been to the PSU between 15 and 20 times. The volunteers were able to help me in a range of ways, such as filling out forms, proofreading statements, printing certain documents, signposting me to other organisations and going with me to court. They have a small library of books that I was able to use and the volunteers were always there to clarify different things for me.

"The PSU offers a very valuable service and I'm grateful for everything they did"

The most significant thing for me was having somebody to discuss my case with. In legal proceedings, there's lots of waiting around. You might arrive at court first thing in the morning and not have your case heard for hours. This makes you very anxious and things start rushing around in your head.

The PSU offered me somebody to talk to at these moments, and after I felt less anxious, more comfortable, and ready to deal with my case. I'd also had previous bad experiences in court, but the volunteers came with me to each hearing, ensuring I was treated fairly. The volunteers often went the extra mile and fulfilled everything they said they would.

The PSU offers a very valuable service and I'm extremely grateful for everything they did.

(*names have been changed for confidentiality)

A judge's view: Her Honour Judge Laura Harris

My view of the PSU is extremely positive and they are a very visible presence in my court. I have no doubt this applies to other judges. In terms of their court assistance, there is a visible change in the body language of people and in their ability to deal with proceedings when they have a PSU volunteer with them.

The volume of litigants in person [an individual not represented in court by a solicitor or barrister] has soared, with many litigants feeling very vulnerable. I find that when there is a PSU presence, people are definitely able to engage better and more confidently.

Out of court, I have noted an increase in situations when the PSU have been able to offer practical help. In particular, they help people fill in statements. I have had cases where the PSU have helped people fill in statements on the day. On one occasion, there was a gentleman who had no statement and it was hard to grasp what his case was about. The PSU helped him while he filled in his statement, so when he came back to my court it made it much easier and clearer to carry on with proceedings because I knew what his main concerns were.

"there is a visible change in the body language of people... when they have a PSU volunteer with them"

The PSU don't only help with statements, they offer practical help in a number of ways, including assisting people when filling out a variety of complex legal forms.

Having a PSU volunteer makes it easier for people to engage, makes them more confident, less tense, and therefore better able to deal with proceedings.



How you can help: **Volunteer for us:** Become a volunteer and help the many people facing court alone. (www.thepsu.org/support/volunteer-for-us)

Donate: Donate online (www.thepsu.org/support/donate) or by a cheque made payable to 'Court Based Personal Support'.