Legal Advice
- a guide for constituents

May 2021
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Legal Advice
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Paper Overview:
This guide outlines and signposts sources of legal advice available to constituents seeking help or support with a variety of legal issues.
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Introduction

This guide outlines and signposts sources of legal advice available to constituents seeking help or support with a variety of legal issues.
Self representation

For some legal matters, is possible to represent yourself in court; this is known as being a “litigant in person”. Further information about this can be found on the GOV.UK page, Represent yourself in court.

Litigant in Person Support Strategy (LIPSS)

LIPSS is a national partnership of organisations working together to improve the experience of people facing the legal process alone. Information on the (LIPSS) on the Access to Justice Foundation website.

Information on the core services of the scheme can be found via the following website links:

- **Advocate** connects litigants in person with a pro bono barrister, from their panel of volunteers.
- **Law for Life** provides guides and digital tools via Advisenow for Litigants in Person.
- **LawWorks’** network of clinics provides free legal help, via volunteer solicitors, to people who are not eligible for legal aid and cannot afford to pay for a lawyer.
- **RCJ Advice** provides family and civil advice to people with a court case from three locations across London. Currently their services are available by email, telephone and zoom.
- **Support Through Court** provides practical and emotional support for litigants in person, while usually court-based, via their National Helpline.
Finding a solicitor

For some legal problems, you will need the help of a private solicitor. Different solicitors will specialise in different areas of law such as crime, education or family law, so it is important to find a solicitor who is an expert in dealing with the area that you need assistance with.

Most local libraries will hold a directory of solicitors; alternatively the Law Society (the independent professional body for solicitors in England and Wales) has a search facility on their website which can be used to search for a local solicitor or one who is an expert in a specific area.

lawsociety.org.uk/find-a-solicitor

Many solicitors will give members of the public a free first appointment.

Contact details:
Telephone: 020 7320 5650
Website: lawsociety.org.uk
Legal aid

Legal aid can help you pay for legal advice, mediation or representation in court if you are unable to meet the costs. This could include help for housing, debt, work, family, benefits or education problems.

You can also get legal aid if you are accused of a crime. An accused person’s solicitor or barrister should be able to confirm whether they can receive criminal legal aid.

Whether you can receive legal aid depends on many things including your financial circumstances (such as how much you earn and what savings you have), and the type of legal help you require. Legal aid is not available for all types of problems.

You can use the GOV.UK online legal aid eligibility calculator to check if you may be entitled to legal aid for non-criminal problems.

**Website:** [www.gov.uk/check-legal-aid](http://www.gov.uk/check-legal-aid)

You can also search for legal aid advisers here: [find-legal-advice.justice.gov.uk](http://find-legal-advice.justice.gov.uk)
Pro bono

“Pro bono” is the term for free legal help for someone who cannot afford to pay for legal assistance and is not entitled to legal aid. If you are not eligible for legal aid funding, some of the advice agencies listed below work with pro bono lawyers who may be able to help with your case.

LawWorks

LawWorks is a charity which aims to provide free legal advice to individuals and not-for-profit groups who cannot afford to pay for it and who are unable to access legal aid. They offer free legal advice clinics, free mediation and free casework assistance. Clinics provide free initial advice to individuals, with a particular focus on social welfare issues, employment law, housing matters and consumer disputes.

To find your nearest LawWorks Clinic, please visit: www.lawworks.org.uk

SpeakEasy Law Centre

The SpeakEasy Law Centre offers free and impartial legal advice across Cardiff & the Vale of Glamorgan, tackling social welfare issues including welfare benefits, debt, housing and employment law.

The Centre offers drop-in advice clinics every week where you can get impartial and confidential advice, free of charge. No appointment is required and the clinics operate on a first come, first served basis. The clinics are staffed by practicing and trainee solicitors.

Contact details:
Address: 166 Richmond Road, Cardiff, CF24 3BX
Telephone: 029 2045 3111
Email: info@speakeasy.cymru
Website: https://www.speakeasy.cymru/
Advocate

Advocate is the pro bono charity of barristers in England and Wales, supported by the Bar Council. Advocate assists in finding free legal help from barristers, in all areas of law across all courts and tribunals across England and Wales.

Contact details:
Advocate DX, 50-52 Chancery Lane, London, WC2A 1HL
TelephoneNumber: 020 7092 3960
Email: Enquiries@weareadvocate.org.uk
Other sources of advice

Citizens Advice

Citizens Advice can help people resolve their debt, benefits, housing, legal, discrimination, employment, immigration, consumer and other problems. Free advice is available face-to-face, by telephone, or by email. Most centres offer home visits and some also provide email advice. Their website has a search facility where you can find the address and contact details of your local office:

citizensadvice.org.uk/wales/about-us/contact-us/contact-us/contact-us/

The Citizens Advice website has lots of factsheets to download and frequently asked questions on a wide range of legal topics.

Contact details:
Telephone: Advicelink: Citizens Advice National phone service 03444 772020
Website: www.citizensadvice.org.uk/wales

Trade Unions

Trade unions often provide free legal advice and representation to their members which is not just confined to work-related matters. In the first instance, contact your local representative to enquire further. Alternatively, some trade unions offer phone helplines which you can call for advice.

Insurance and Memberships

Many insurance policies offer legal expenses insurance cover as an extra which can cover quite wide ranging disputes. Subscribers to magazines like which may also be able to access legal advice helplines.

Specific sources of advice
Specific sources of advice

There are also lots of charities which run legal advice services for particular groups or for those with specific issues.

Acas (Advisory, Conciliation and Arbitration Service)

Acas provides free and impartial information and advice to employers and employees on all aspects of workplace relations and employment law.

Their website has an Advice and Guidance section which provides information covering a wide range of employment matters, from writing a contract of employment, to holiday entitlement, and working from home arrangements.

Contact details:
Telephone helpline: 0300 123 1100. (Mon-Fri 8am-6pm)
Website: www.acas.org.uk/

Action Against Medical Accidents

Action Against Medical Accidents (AvMA) is the national charity for patient safety and justice. Their website has a Help and Advice section which provides options if you or a family member may have suffered medical negligence. Their advice is free and confidential.

Contact details:
Telephone helpline: 0845 123 2352 (Mon-Fri 10am - 3.30pm)
Website: www.avma.org.uk

Advicenow

Advicenow is an independent, not-for-profit website, run by the charity Law for Life: the Foundation for Public Legal Education. It aims to provide accurate, practical information on rights and the law in England and Wales. The website features guides and advice and signposting on a variety of topics including benefits, family and personal, housing and homelessness, and immigration and nationality.

Website: www.advicenow.org.uk
Age Cymru

Age Cymru is a charity which provides advice and information about a range of issues relevant to older people, including benefits and entitlements, pensions advice and finding care and support at home.

Contact details:
Age Cymru, Ground Floor, Mariners House, Trident Court, East Moors Road, Cardiff, CF24 5TD
Telephone: 029 2043 1555 (Mon-Fri 10am – 4pm)
Email: advice@agecymru.org.uk
Website: www.ageuk.org.uk/cymru

Asylum Justice

Asylum Justice is a charitable organisation in Wales offering free legal advice and representation to asylum seekers, recognised refugees and other vulnerable migrants.

Contact details:
Telephone: 029 2049 9421 (Mon-Thur 8am-10am & 5pm-7pm)
Email: using form here

Coram Children's Legal Centre

Coram Children’s Legal Centre (CCLC) is a registered charity which promotes the rights of children across the UK and internationally. It offers free legal representation, information and advice to children, young people, and their families and carers across the UK. They offer advice and factsheets on a variety of issues, including immigration, asylum and nationality, education, and social services and community care.

Contact details:
Coram Children’s Legal Centre, Wellington House, 4th Floor, 90-92 Butt Road, Colchester, Essex CO3 3DA
Email: info@coramclc.org.uk
Website: www.childrenslegalcentre.com
Disability Law Service

Run by and for disabled people, the Disability Law Service provides information and advice to disabled and deaf people.

They can provide advice in the following areas:

- Community Care
- Employment
- Housing
- Welfare Benefits
- For those with MS

Contact details:
Telephone: 020 7791 9800
Email: advice@dls.org.uk
Website: www.dls.org.uk

Equality Advisory Support Service

The Equality Advisory Support Service (EASS) offers advice and assistance to individuals relating to equality and human rights. The EASS assist clients in reaching resolution of their issue without having to resort to legal proceedings. The EASS provide a helpline and a variety of online resources including factsheets and template letters.

Contact details:
Freephone Telephone: 0808 800 0082
Text phone: 0808 800 0084
Email: Using form here
Website: www.equalityadvisoryservice.com

Family Rights Group

The Family Rights Group (FRG) is a charity which works with parents whose children are in need, at risk or are in the care system and with members of the wider family who are raising children and unable to stay at home. FRG has a series of relevant advice sheets and frequently asked questions and a Frequently asked questions for fathers section. The FRG also provides information on family support groups and provides a ‘Family and Friends Carers’ discussion board.
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Contact details:
Telephone: 0808 801 0366
Website: https://www.frg.org.uk/

Inquest

Inquest is a registered charity which offers free, independent advice and support to bereaved people following a death in state care, custody or detention in England or Wales. They also offer support to families throughout the inquest process. Inquest also produces The Inquest Handbook: A Guide for Bereaved Families, Friends and Survivors, a resource for family and friends dealing with the aftermath of a sudden bereavement providing a guide through the inquest process.

Contact details:
Telephone: 020 7263 1111 (press option 1 for new enquiries)
Casework contact form
Website: www.inquest.org.uk

Mind Cymru

Mind Cymru is the Wales branch of Mind a registered charity which provides advice and support for those experiencing a mental health problem.

The Mind website provides general advice on mental health-related law covering:

- complaining about health and social care
- consent to treatment
- discrimination at work
- sectioning

Mind have a specialist legal team who can provide legal information and general advice on mental health related law.

Contact details:
Telephone: Mind Cymru: 029 2039 5123
Legal Line: 0300 466 6463
Email: legal@mind.org.uk
Website: https://www.mind.org.uk/about-us/mind-cymru/
**National Debtline**

National Debtline is a charity which provides free and independent advice and information about debt problems over the phone and online.

The National Debtline website also provides a fact sheet library with advice and information on a wide range of debt issues and options to deal with debt.

**Contact details:**
**Telephone:** Speak to an adviser 0808 808 4000 (Mon-Fri 9am - 8pm; Sat 9.30am - 1pm)
**Website:** [www.nationaldebtline.co.uk](http://www.nationaldebtline.co.uk)

**Rights of Women**

A women’s charity which provides free, confidential legal advice to women by specialist women solicitors and barristers. The website features legal guides and handbooks in different areas of law including marriage, divorce and finances, domestic violence and sexual harassment at work.

**Contact details:**
**Website:** [rightsofwomen.org.uk](http://rightsofwomen.org.uk)
**Telephone advice lines:**

- Criminal law advice:  
  **Telephone:** 020 7251 8887
- Family law advice  
  **Telephone:** 020 7251 6577
- Immigration and asylum law advice  
  **Telephone:** 020 7490 7689
- Sexual harassment at work  
  **Telephone:** 020 7490 0152
Shelter Cymru

Shelter Cymru specialises in providing information and advocacy to people in housing need in Wales. Shelter Cymru operates local housing advice surgeries across Wales, some of these are drop-in and some by appointment only.

The Shelter website also provides online advice on a range of housing related topics including homelessness, eviction and mortgage repossession.

Contact details:
Telephone: Helpline: 08000 495 495 (Mon-Fri 9.30am-4pm)
Webchat: https://sheltercymru.org.uk/get-advice/webchat/#
Website: https://sheltercymru.org.uk/