

Legal Advice Constituents Guide

October 2019



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National Assembly for Wales
Senedd Research

Legal Advice

Constituents Guide

October 2019

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Paper Overview:

This constituency factsheet provides information on different sources of legal advice for constituents seeking help or support with a variety of legal issues.

Acknowledgements: This paper has used sources found in the House of Commons Library briefing paper: Legal help: where to go and how to pay (2018)



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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, it 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](#). The Ministry of Justice also provides support for people who are going to represent themselves in court through their [Litigant in Person Support Strategy \(LiPS\)](#). The [AdviceNow](#) website also provides information on their webpage [Going to court or tribunal without the help of a lawyer](#).

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 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

You can also search for legal aid advisers here: 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 help to individuals and community 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, 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 a charity which finds free legal help from barristers.

Contact details:

Telephone: 020 7092 3960

(Lines open Monday, Wednesday and Friday between 10:15 AM - 12.45 PM)

Email: Enquiries@weareadvocate.org.uk

The Bar Pro Bono Unit

The **Bar Pro Bono Unit** matches barristers prepared to undertake pro bono work with those who need their help. Applications cannot be made by individuals but you can ask to be referred by any of the agencies below:

- [Citizens Advice](#)
- [Law Centre](#)
- [Your local MP/AM](#)

For more information please visit: www.barprobono.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/about-us/how-we-provide-advice/advice

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

Contact details:

Telephone: 03444 77 20 20

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

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

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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, to the latest employment legislation.

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 the public with legal education and resources. The website features guides and template letters on a variety of topics including benefits, divorce and separation, housing, and immigration. They also offer guidance on how to avoid going to court in the first place and a directory of helpful organisations.

Website: www.advicenow.org.uk

Age UK

Age UK is a charity which provides advice and information about a range of issues relevant to older people through its website and advice line. It has a Wales-specific section on its website.

Contact details:

Telephone: 08000 223 444

Website: www.ageuk.org.uk/cymru

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 on a variety of issues, including immigration and asylum, education, and social services and their website features legal information factsheets written especially for children and young people.

Contact details:

Email: info@coramclc.org.uk

Telephone: 01206 714 650 (general enquiries only, no legal advice given on this line)

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 Law
- Employment and discrimination law

Contact details:

Telephone: 020 7791 9800

Textphone: 020 7791 9801

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. They do not provide legal advice, but instead try to help clients reach resolution without having to resort to legal proceedings. The EASS offers a helpline and a variety of online resources including factsheets and templates of letters to raise complaints under the Equalities Act 2010.

Contact details:

Freephone Telephone: 0808 800 0082

Text phone: 0808 800 0084

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. FRG has a series of [relevant advice sheets](#) and [frequently asked questions](#). It also has [family support groups](#) and [family forums](#). FRG also provides a list of [advice sheets for fathers](#).

Contact details:

Freephone 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](#) which can be downloaded for free or you can request a print copy from their website.

Contact details:

Telephone: 020 7263 1111 (press option 1)

Website: www.inquest.org.uk

Mind

Mind is a registered charity which provides advice and support to empower anyone experiencing a mental health problem.

They have a special legal team who can provide information and general advice on mental health-related law covering:

- mental health
- mental capacity
- community care
- human rights and discrimination/equality related to mental health issues

Contact details:

Telephone: 0300 466 6463

Website: www.mind.org.uk/information-support/legal-rights/

National Debtline

National Debtline provides advice and information about debt problems over the phone or by email.

The helpline provides free confidential and independent advice on how to deal with debt problems.

The National Debtline website also has information packs and factsheets for individuals with specific problems to download:

Contact details:

Telephone: 0808 808 4000

Email: www.nationaldebtline.co.uk/england_wales

Website: 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.

Contact details:

Website: 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

Shelter Cymru

Shelter Cymru specialise in providing information and advocacy to people in housing need in Wales. Shelter Cymru operate local housing advice surgeries, some of these are drop-in and some by appointment only. Shelter also gives free specialist advice over the phone.

The Shelter website can also be used to search for services that provide advice on housing, debt, benefits, care and health needs.

Contact details:

Telephone: 0345 075 5005

Website: <https://sheltercymru.org.uk/>