

Legal Advice

- a guide for constituents

May 2023



The Welsh Parliament is the democratically elected body that represents the interests of Wales and its people. Commonly known as the Senedd, it makes laws for Wales, agrees Welsh taxes and holds the Welsh Government to account.

An electronic copy of this document can be found on the Welsh Parliament website: www.research.senedd.wales

Copies of this document can also be obtained in accessible formats including Braille, large print, audio or hard copy from:

Senedd Research
Welsh Parliament
Tŷ Hywel
Cardiff Bay
CF99 1SN

Twitter: [@SeneddResearch](https://twitter.com/SeneddResearch)

Website: research.senedd.wales

© **Senedd Commission Copyright 2023**

The text of this document may be reproduced free of charge in any format or medium providing that it is reproduced accurately and not used in a misleading or derogatory context. The material must be acknowledged as copyright of the Senedd Commission and the title of the document specified.

Legal Advice

- a guide for constituents

May 2023

Authors:

Matthew Davies

Paper Overview:

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



Contents

Introduction.....	1
1. Finding a solicitor.....	2
2. Legal aid	3
Advocate	4
LawWorks	4
North and Mid Wales Legal Clinic.....	4
SpeakEasy Law Centre	5
Swansea Law Centre	5
University of South Wales Legal Advice Clinic.....	5
4. Self representation	6
Advicenow.....	6
RCJ Advice	6
Support Through the Court	6
5. Other sources of advice	7
Citizens Advice.....	7
Insurance and Memberships.....	7
Trade Unions.....	7

6. Specific sources of advice..... 8

Acas (Advisory, Conciliation and Arbitration Service) 8

Action Against Medical Accidents 8

Advicenow **8**

Age Cymru 9

Asylum Justice 9

Coram Children’s Legal Centre 9

Disability Law Service 10

Employment Tribunal Litigants in Person Support Scheme (ELIPS) 10

Equality Advisory Support Service 10

Family Rights Group 11

Gingerbread 11

Inquest 11

Maternity Action 12

Mind Cymru 12

National Debtline 13

Planning Aid Wales 13

Race Equality First 14

Rights of Women 14

Shelter Cymru 14

Working Families 15

Introduction

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

1. 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 in which you need assistance.

Most local libraries will hold a directory of solicitors; alternatively the Law Society (the professional association that represents and governs 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](https://www.lawsociety.org.uk/find-a-solicitor)

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

Contact details:

Telephone: 020 7242 1222

Website: **[lawsociety.org.uk](https://www.lawsociety.org.uk)**

2. 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.

www.gov.uk/check-legal-aid

You can also search for legal aid advisers here: **find-legal-advice.justice.gov.uk**

3. 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.

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, 2nd Floor Lincoln House, 296-302 High Holborn, London, WC1V 7JH

Telephone: 020 7092 3960

Email: enquiries@weareadvocate.org.uk

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, where clients usually have 30 minutes to one hour to explain an issue and in return will receive basic advice on the next steps to take.

Website: www.lawworks.org.uk

North and Mid Wales Legal Clinic

The North and Mid Wales Law Clinic is led by Ynys Môn Citizen’s Advice in partnership with Citizens Advice Denbighshire and Bangor University. With a focus on family, community care and employment law, law students from Bangor University overseen by experts from legal firms help provide legal guidance to clients.

Contact details:

Telephone: 0140 776 2278

Email: lipnorthwales@gmail.com

SpeakEasy Law Centre

The **SpeakEasy Law Centre**, part of the **Law Centres Network**, offers free and impartial legal advice across Cardiff & the Vale of Glamorgan, specialising in welfare benefits, debt, housing and employment law.

The Centre offers face-to-face appointments and advice and support by phone and email.

Contact details:

Address: 166 Richmond Road, Cardiff, CF24 3BX

Telephone: 029 2045 3111

Email: info@speakeasy.cymru

Website: www.speakeasy.cymru/

Swansea Law Centre

The **Law Clinic at Swansea University** offers free initial advice about legal problems while giving students the chance to work alongside practising lawyers to advise real clients. The Law Clinic can help with a range of legal matters including landlord and tenant disputes; employment issues; benefits advice and immigration and asylum advice.

Appointments with student advisors can be arranged during term times. Appointments are used as information-gathering sessions, which are then followed-up by a legal advice letter.

Those wishing to be considered for an appointment must download and complete the 2023 Bilingual Client Appointment Request Form and return it to lawclinic@swansea.ac.uk

University of South Wales Legal Advice Clinic

The **University of South Wales Legal Advice Clinic** run free public appointments where students (with qualified legal supervision) interview and assess clients, and then draw up legal advice in several legal areas such as employment, housing, debt, family and contract matters.

The Clinic is an appointment based service only and does not provide legal advice by telephone or email.

Those seeking legal advice, must firstly complete the Legal Advice Clinic **enquiry form**.

4. 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.**

Advicenow

Advicenow is an independent, not-for-profit website, run by the charity **Law for Life: the Foundation for Public Legal Education**, which provides information on rights and the law in England and Wales and advice for litigants in person.

Website: **www.advicenow.org.uk**

RCJ Advice

RCJ Advice provides free legal advice to people with a court case in the civil and family courts in England and Wales. All their services are via email, telephone and zoom

Website: **www.rcjadvice.org.uk**

Support Through the Court

Support Through Court provides free practical and emotional support for litigants in person. The charity has **local offices** across England and Wales and also offers a **National Helpline Service.**

Website: **www.supportthroughcourt.org**

5. 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 provides [advice on a wide range of topics](#).

Contact details:

Telephone: Advicelink: Citizens Advice National phone service 03444 77 20 20

Website: www.citizensadvice.org.uk/wales

Insurance and Memberships

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

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.

6. 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** section which provides template letters and information covering a wide range of employment matters, including redundancy, flexible working and employment contracts.

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: 0300 303 44 98 (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

Email: using form [here](#)

Website: www.asylumjustice.org.uk

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

The **Disability Law Service** provides information and advice to disabled people and their carers.

They can provide advice in the following areas:

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

Contact details:

Disability Law Service, The Foundry, 17 Oval Way, London, SE11 5RR

Telephone: 020 7791 9800

Email: advice@dls.org.uk

Website: www.dls.org.uk

Employment Tribunal Litigants in Person Support Scheme (ELIPS)

The Employment Lawyers Association's scheme provides assistance to unrepresented litigants, currently covering London Central, Cardiff, Bristol, Midlands (West), Newcastle, Leeds and Manchester Employment TRibunals. Clinics operate twice monthly on a Thursday via Zoom.

Contact details:

Telephone: elips@elaweb.org

Website: elaweb.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 that provides advice to parents, grandparents, relatives and friends about their rights and options when social workers or courts make decisions about their children's welfare. The FRG website provides **advice, tips and templates letters**.

Contact details:

Family Rights Group, 101 Pentonville Road, London, N1 9LG

Telephone: 0808 801 0366 (Mon-Fri 9:30am-3pm)

Website: www.frg.org.uk/

Gingerbread

Gingerbread are a national charity working with single parent families who provide advice, practical support and campaign for single parent families.

The charity offers a range of **advice and support services** for single parents. These include information pages, helpline and webchat advice, an online forum and local groups.

Contact details:

Gingerbread, Unit B, Ground Floor, Mary Brancker House, 54-74 Holmes Road, London, NW5 3AQ

Telephone: 0808 802 0925

Website: gingerbread.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.

The Inquest website provides access to the **Inquest handbook**, the **Inquest Skills and Support Toolkit** and **factsheets**.

Contact details:

Inquest, 3rd Floor, 89-93 Fonthill Road, London, N4 3JH

Telephone: 020 7263 1111 (press option 1 for new enquiries)

Casework contact form

Website: www.inquest.org.uk

Maternity Action

Maternity Action is a charity dedicated to promoting, protecting and enhancing the rights of all pregnant women, new mothers and families to employment, social security and health care.

The charity provides **free online information** and telephone advice on **maternity rights (work and benefits)**; advice on **NHS charging for maternity care** and **migrant women's rights service - training and support**.

Contact details:

Maternity Action, Second Floor, 3-4 Wells Terrace, London, N4 3JU

Telephone advice lines:

Maternity Rights Advice Line:

Telephone: 0808 802 0029 (Mon-Fri 10am-1pm)

Email: [Using online contact form](#)

Advice on NHS charging for maternity care:

Telephone: 0808 800 0041 (Tues-Thurs 10am-12pm)

Email: [Using online contact form](#)

Migrant Women's Rights Service - Training and Support:

Telephone: 020 7251 6189 (tues-Thurs 10am-12pm and 2-4pm)

Email: migrantwomensrights@maternityaction.org.uk

Website: maternityaction.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 **legal rights** including sectioning, hospital treatment and discharge; discrimination rights and

legislation guides.

Mind's **Legal line** provides legal information and general advice on mental health related law. Contact details:

Legal Line

Mind Legal line, PO Box 75225, London, E15 9FS

Telephone: 0300 466 6463

Contact details:

Mind Cymru, Suite 1, 9th Floor, Brunel House, 2 Fitzalan Road, Cardiff, CF24 0EB

Email: supporterrelations@mind.org.uk

Website: 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** and **sample letter library**.

Contact details:

Telephone: Speak to an adviser 0808 808 4000 (Mon-Fri 9am - 8pm; Sat 9.30am - 1pm)

Webchat with an advisor link [here](#)

Website: nationaldebtline.org/

Planning Aid Wales

Planning Aid Wales is an independent, charitable organisation helping individuals and communities across Wales to participate more effectively in the planning system.

Planning Aid Wales provides information on planning policies and planning applications in Wales on its **Planning Advice** page and offers a **free Helpline service**, to assist eligible members of the public and community groups needing help with a planning matter.

Contact details:

Planning Aid Wales, 12 Cathedral Road, Cardiff CF11 9LJ

Telephone: 02920 625 000 (11am-1pm, Mon, Tues and Fri)

Email: rosa@planningaidwales.org.uk

Website: planningaidwales.org.uk/

Race Equality First

Race Equality First provide support and advice for people who face discrimination, harassment, hate crime and disadvantage. This work includes their **Discrimination Casework Service** assisting individuals who have suffered discrimination due to any protected characteristics they may possess within the Equality Act 2010 and undertaking **advocacy for victims of hate crime**.

Contact details:

Race Equality First, 1st Floor West, 113-116 Bute St, Cardiff CF10 5EQ

Telephone: 02920 486207

Email enquiries form [here](#)

Website: raceequalityfirst.org/

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

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: sheltercymru.org.uk/get-advice/webchat/#

Website: sheltercymru.org.uk/

Working Families

Working Families a national UK charity for working parents and carers, whose mission is to remove the barriers that people with caring responsibilities face in the workplace.

The charity provides **free legal advice** to parents and carers on **their rights at work** on a range of topics affecting parents and carers at work, including **pregnancy and maternity rights**; **flexible working** and **childcare support**.

Contact details:

Working Families, c/o Buzzacott LLP, 130 Wood Street, London EC2V 6DL

Telephone: 0300 012 0312

Online advice form here

Website: workingfamilies.org.uk