



FINDING A SOLICITOR

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INTRODUCTION

From time to time we can all benefit from some legal advice but finding a suitable solicitor can be difficult. This information sheet guides you through the process of obtaining legal advice.

FREE INITIAL ADVICE

ICAEW members based in England and Wales have access to a free Legal Helpline, provided by **CABA**. Their 24 hour helpline for past and present ICAEW members and their families gives access to a legal department manned by lawyers and qualified legal advisors. You can call the helpline on +44 (0)800 107 6163 or **chat to an advisor online** to ask questions about your legal rights and get advice on a legal situation. Please note that the helpline cannot advise on ICAEW disciplinary matters.

SELECTION CRITERIA

However you may prefer to adopt the following to help you appoint an appropriate solicitor.

Think about the attributes you need, for example:

- What technical discipline do you need e.g. employment law?
- What geographic area do you prefer e.g. close to home or the office?
- Do you want oral or written advice?
- Would you prefer a national firm or a smaller local firm?
- How quickly do you need advice?
- Are there any other criteria relevant to your specific circumstances?

PERSONAL NETWORK

Have you got a network of colleagues who have used a solicitor in a given area before who can make a recommendation? A recommendation of someone who has a reputation for always getting good results can be more reassuring to you than selecting from a list.

SOLICITORS ONLINE

If you haven't got a recommendation, the Law Society maintains a [database of legal professionals](#). This enables you to browse by technical discipline and geographical location to draw up a shortlist of firms. Alternatively you can telephone the Law Society on +44 (0)207 242 1222. Another useful website is the online [Chambers Directory](#) to find lawyers and law firms using a range of search criteria such as area of law, or location/region.

APPOINTING A BARRISTER

You may appoint a barrister direct to assist you using the Bar Council's [direct access portal](#). Otherwise your solicitor can make the appointment for you.

SHORTLIST OF CANDIDATES

As with any service it is wise to consider a shortlist to give yourself a choice of adviser. This may not always be possible as you may need a specialist and some lawyers will be unavailable to you because they have a conflict of interest. Search through those available and make your choice based on your personal preferences. Find out if any give the first half hour's advice free or offer a free initial consultation and then compare charging rates. When you have your shortlist ring the firms and speak to them. Their responses will be likely to help you position them in your shortlist.

APPEARING BEFORE ICAEW DISCIPLINARY COMMITTEES

It can be particularly daunting if the case against you is referred to the Disciplinary Committee. However you do have a right to appear before the committee and also to be represented by your solicitor or barrister.

The Disciplinary Committee can award unlimited fines and also has powers to exclude individuals from membership of ICAEW. It is therefore important that you are properly prepared for the hearing and that you seek legal advice if appropriate.

Whilst CABA cannot assist in such circumstances, there are solicitors and barristers that specialise in this sort of work. Use the solicitors online and Bar Council search facilities.

Using a search engine can also be helpful and appropriate key words to search might include a combination of 'professional discipline' 'professional regulation and discipline' 'defence against professional discipline', 'accountancy professional', 'barrister' and 'solicitor'

PRO BONO

You may well have legal expenses insurance as part of your household contents insurance policy or be entitled to legal advice as a benefit attached to your credit card or associated with membership of another organisation. This may well include legal help with things such as employment disputes but may also include some restrictions or exclusions so it is worth reading the small print.

The **Law Centres Network** is staffed by solicitors and other specialist caseworkers and can provide free advice on issues such as employment or debt. All Law Centres offer face-to-face legal advice to local residents, and some run a telephone advice line.

Don't forget that there are some legal groups who undertake work without charge for example the national **Citizens Advice** network, **FRU** and **Law Works** that are well worth investigating if circumstances mean that you have difficulty in paying for advice.

USEFUL HINTS AND TIPS

Do:

- Draft out the problem as succinctly as possible (aim for no more than two sides of A4) in writing. Review what you've written and, if there's time get someone else you trust to read it and check you haven't missed anything important.
- Prepare a list of the main characters involved with brief descriptions of them.
- Prepare a chronology setting out the timescale of events.
- Summarise in bullet point form the specific advice that you are seeking.
- Specify whether the end product is required in writing or just orally.
- Attach a schedule of all the documents that you think are relevant and have ready for the solicitor in case they want to see them.
- Send the papers sufficiently in advance of your meeting so that your solicitor is well prepared to advise you.

Don't:

- Include a lot of irrelevant material which the solicitor will have to read and charge you for.
- Be indecisive about what you are looking for.
- Be put off if you are only able to see a junior member of staff.

ABOUT THE SUPPORT MEMBERS SCHEME

The Support Members Scheme provides support to members of ICAEW who are in difficulty. The support members offer totally confidential, non-judgemental telephone or face to face support to members of any age, in any circumstances and relating to your professional or personal life. They are trained to listen and are familiar with all of ICAEW's relevant procedures as well as other specialised helplines and resources. Support members themselves come from a variety of backgrounds but are all members of ICAEW committed to helping other members.

If you feel you could benefit from discussing your situation with a support member, please contact the scheme on +44 (0)800 917 3526 or email support.members@icaew.com. Contact information for support members is also available on the website icaew.com/supportmembers.

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