

Getting the best from a solicitor

There are times in your life when you might need to get help from a solicitor, for example when buying a house, starting a business or getting a divorce.

Some resources to get you started

You can find facts about different legal problems and working with different types of lawyers at the Legal Choices website [<http://www.legalchoices.org.uk/>].

The Law Society's guides to common legal issues [<http://www.lawsociety.org.uk/for-the-public/common-legal-issues/>] can help familiarise you with things to bear in mind.

Getting the best from your solicitor

Video: Managing your relationship with your lawyer

To get the best outcome for your legal issue, it is important to make sure you:

- are clear with your solicitor, at every point, about what you want to happen and what they are going to do for you
- understand the cost implications [<https://www.sra.org.uk/consumers/instructing/costs-legal-aid/>] of any instructions you give your solicitor, including
 - any effect they may have on eligibility for legal aid, (your solicitor will tell you if they think you are eligible to use this), or
 - if your legal costs are being covered by another organisation (such as a trade union), whether what the solicitor can do is limited by their agreement with that organisation
- take notes of all conversations you have with your solicitor or other employees at the firm, such as
 - who you spoke to
 - when you spoke to them
 - what was said, and
 - any future actions that were agreed, including deadlines
- keep copies of all relevant paperwork, including emails, and read it through thoroughly—if you have trouble understanding it, get someone to help you; and

- send any important documents to your solicitor by the most secure methods possible, such as recorded delivery, and check that they have been received (keep a record of receipt); you can request that your documents are returned to you in the same way.

Taking these steps should mean that you get the best outcome and service from your solicitor or firm. Should something go wrong, and you need to make a complaint at a later date, you will be better equipped to get the best result.

How to complain about a solicitor

Sometimes things go wrong and you don't get the outcome that you want as a result. You won't always win your case, but any solicitor or firm should do their best for you and let you know if this is likely to happen, or it's not in your best interest to take a course of action. However, if something does go wrong and you think your solicitor or firm is at fault, you can complain.

The first thing you must always do is complain to the solicitor or firm.

If the solicitor or firm fails to resolve the complaint to your satisfaction, you can talk to the Legal Ombudsman [<http://www.legalombudsman.org.uk/>]. The Legal Ombudsman deals with poor service and can refund or reduce your legal fees, order the firm to apologise or order the firm to pay you compensation.

If you think your solicitor has breached one of the SRA Principles, you can report them or their firm to us [<https://www.sra.org.uk/consumers/problems/report-solicitor/>] —this page also contains further information about

- how to make a complaint to your solicitor, including helpful tips and links to further help with making complaints
- when to take your complaint to the Legal Ombudsman and more about what they do; and
- when and how to report a solicitor or firm to us.

More videos: I'm unhappy with my lawyer - what shall I do?

[<https://www.sra.org.uk/consumers/problems/report-solicitor/#video>]