

ALTERNATIVE FORMATS

The Law Society of Northern Ireland can make this information available in other formats and selected languages on request.

Please email info@lawsoc-ni.org or telephone **028 90231614**



This leaflet has been issued by the Law Society of Northern Ireland.

It constitutes general information only. In the event of a specific issue arising you are advised to consult your own solicitor to obtain the appropriate legal advice. The Law Society of Northern Ireland accepts no liability whatsoever and howsoever caused to any person in relation to taking a certain course of action or not taking a certain course of action in reliance on what is stated in this publication or omitted from it.

The Law Society of Northern Ireland
Law Society House
96 Victoria Street
BELFAST BT1 3GN
Telephone: 028 9023 1614
www.lawsoc-ni.org

Using a Solicitor in Northern Ireland



The majority of people will at some stage in their lives require expert and independent professional legal advice. There are many different areas in which the law affects people's lives and there can be many different legal problems.

Understanding what the law means is very important and that is why it is vital to always seek expert, confidential and independent legal advice from a solicitor.

WHAT SORT OF LEGAL HELP DO YOU NEED?

Often the services offered by a solicitor may cover a wide range of subject matters. It is always a good idea to ask them what areas of law they can offer advice on to make sure that they are suitable for your needs. If they are unable to help you, they will be able to recommend another solicitor who may specialise in the area of law that you require.

HOW DO YOU KNOW THAT THEY ARE A QUALIFIED SOLICITOR?

All solicitors in private practice must hold a Practising Certificate issued by the Law Society of Northern Ireland, the professional regulatory body for solicitors.

A Practising Certificate means that the solicitor is authorised to practise law. You can ask to see the solicitors Practising Certificate in person at their office or you can write to the Law Society of Northern Ireland seeking confirmation.

All solicitors in Northern Ireland must adhere to standards set by the Law Society of Northern Ireland as the regulating authority for solicitors.

Solicitors are required by law and by regulations to act ethically, honourably and with integrity at all times.

You may find that your solicitor may use one of their staff to assist that solicitor in running your case and to liaise with you. This is not uncommon and staff will always be supervised by your solicitor. You can ask your solicitor any questions or let them know if you are not happy with any aspect of their work.

HOW TO FIND A SOLICITOR CLOSE TO WHERE YOU LIVE?

Where a solicitor firm is located is important for ease of access, travelling and convenience.

You should use the Society's online solicitor directory www.lawsoc-ni.org to find a solicitor who works close to where you live.

Some solicitors can also arrange to visit your home if you have problems in travelling to their office.

HOW DO I KNOW IF MY SOLICITOR DOES LEGAL AID WORK?

Legal aid is financial assistance provided by government to those on a low income or in receipt of state benefits in which the state pays for the legal services provided by a solicitor.

Some solicitors do offer to work for legal aid rates and others do not. You should check this with your solicitor at the outset.

The Law Society of Northern Ireland solicitors directory on www.lawsoc-ni.org allows you to search for those firms who do offer legal aid services.

CAN I TRUST MY SOLICITOR WITH MY PERSONAL DETAILS?

A solicitor is a qualified professional who will always act in accordance with your wishes under the law and in respect of your need for privacy and confidentiality. Sometimes you may need to see a solicitor about a sensitive personal matter and it is important that you feel comfortable talking to someone that you trust.

Solicitors aim to be sympathetic and understanding of your situation.

Please ask your solicitor if you would prefer to speak to someone else, for example, someone who is the same sex as you, if that would make you more comfortable.

IF I CANNOT SPEAK ENGLISH, HOW WILL THE SOLICITOR UNDERSTAND ME?

If English is not your first language, you should mention this when you are trying to find a solicitor. If you explain this to them, they can arrange for an interpreter to be present at your meetings.

IF I AM DISABLED, CAN THE SOLICITOR MAKE PROVISION FOR ME?

Solicitors must make sure that people with disabilities can access their services.

If you have a disability which requires a reasonable adjustment you should tell your solicitor straight away. They will then tell you what adjustments they can make.

HOW TO CHOOSE A SOLICITOR?

The Law Society of Northern Ireland's website www.lawsoc-ni.org provides a solicitors directory which allows you to search for a solicitor by name, by firm, by location or by the legal services which they offer.

MORE INFORMATION

For more information please visit the Publications Section of the website of the Law Society of Northern Ireland where leaflets on various subject matters are available. www.lawsoc-ni.org

To speak to a local solicitor please visit www.lawsoc-ni.org