

Do I need a barrister?

What does a barrister do? Barristers specialise in representing people in court and at hearings, giving specialist legal advice (including drafting court documents and witness statements) and providing written advice.

Barristers can:

- Advise you on whether you have a case
- Give legal advice in a meeting or over the phone
- Give legal advice in writing
- Draft documents such as skeleton arguments
- Represent you in any court/tribunal

Barristers cannot:

- Give general legal advice on a problem
- Prepare a case and paperwork for the court/tribunal
- Lodge papers at the court/tribunal
- Provide administrative support (organising papers and making bundles)
- Write letters on your behalf

What's the difference between a barrister and a solicitor? Solicitors can be consulted directly by members of the public who have legal problems. They provide advice and can prepare a case if a problem needs to go to court or other hearing. Barristers are not usually hired by members of the public, but Advocate has a special licence which enables barristers to engage directly with our applicants.

How do I know what I need? Very often, the first place to go for a piece of legal advice will be a solicitor. If you can't afford to pay, it's worth asking if they can offer a free half hour or short free first appointment. Solicitors can also be found in Law Centres and legal advice clinics. Another good place for to go is Citizen's Advice and these places will then often suggest coming to Advocate if they think a barrister can help. They will be able to help you fill out our application form if you ask them to.

What do I do if I'm not sure? If you are not already involved in court proceedings (or been threatened with them) and have not seen a solicitor or other advisor, it's best to start there (see above for how to find a solicitor). If the solicitor thinks you need help from a barrister, they can refer you to Advocate. Barristers usually focus on specialist areas of law and get involved when you need advice on a specific problem that relates to going to court.