

# advocate



**What we do:** We match volunteer barristers with people and organisations in need of free legal advice, drafting or representation and who fit our eligibility criteria. We cover all areas of law and operate all throughout England and Wales.

**Who we can help:** We can help both individuals and organisations/businesses.

- People often need a barrister because they have been threatened with legal action, are involved in a court case or tribunal hearing and they are an unrepresented litigant in person who cannot afford independent legal advice.
- Organisations apply for help with legal proceedings, or when they need specialist barrister advice on employment and contract/debt issues.

We can offer help to those who:

- Need a barrister to help with a case (not a solicitor).
- Have a case based in England or Wales.
- Have a hearing or deadline falling at least three weeks after the completed application form is received.

**Who is eligible?** We cannot provide legal help to:

- People who qualify for legal aid.
- Anyone who can afford the legal help they need.
- People who have legal expenses or other insurance covering the problem they need help with.
- Anyone with a case exceeding three days of a barrister's time.

**A barrister can:**

- Represent an applicant in any court/tribunal
- Give legal advice in a meeting or over the phone
- Give legal advice in writing
- Draft documents such as skeleton arguments

**A barrister cannot:**

- Prepare a case and paperwork for the court/tribunal
- Lodge papers at the court/tribunal
- Provide administrative back up
- Write letters on an applicant's behalf

**How to apply:** The first step is to complete an application form and provide as much supporting documentation as possible. This can be done in two ways:

- By using an **online application form** (individuals only) and uploading documents to it.
- Downloading a word or pdf **application form**, scanning it and all relevant documents and sending it by **email** or post.

Lists of useful supporting documents can be found on our **helpful information** page.

**How the service works:** We accept applications directly from members of the public or business owners, and referrals from advice agencies like Citizens Advice, law centres, legal clinics, solicitors or MPs.

- The application form is very detailed, and most people need help completing it and gathering the relevant documents. We need a lot of clear information at the start to decide whether we can offer to help.
- Application forms not completed online can be emailed to **enquiries@weareadvocate.org.uk** along with the supporting documents.
- A caseworker reviews the application and contacts the applicant with any questions about the case, their eligibility or requests for more information.
- Once all the information is gathered and if it is eligible, the case is passed to a reviewer who will assess whether it is suitable (on legal and financial merits) for a volunteer barrister to help. They then authorise a specific piece of work.
- If the case passes the review stage, we try to match the applicant with a barrister who can provide the free legal advice, drafting or representation authorised by the reviewer. The barrister does not take on the whole case.
- If Advocate can't find a barrister, we tell the applicant before any deadline so they still have the chance to represent themselves.

For more information, please see our **website**.