



# Using Legal Help and Legal Aid for family law services

**If you need assistance in paying for legal advice, you may be able to get Legal Help.**

Legal Help is a means-tested scheme which provides you with free legal advice and assistance, subject to financial eligibility.

As we have a contract with the Legal Aid Agency, we can provide Legal Help-funded services to you from all of our offices in Bristol and South Gloucestershire.

## Do I qualify for Legal Help?

Since April 2013, Legal Help in private law matters (such as divorce or child contact disputes) is only available to people who are, or who have been, a victim of domestic abuse.

You must be able to prove that you fall into this category by producing evidence of violence or abuse. Your solicitor can help you do this.

If you haven't been a victim of domestic abuse, you can still access Legal Help for family law matters through mediation. Your solicitor will provide more information and assess your financial eligibility.

## How do I apply for Legal Help?

Applying for Legal Help is very simple.

When you see your solicitor, you'll need to complete a Legal Help application form. We'll use this to determine your eligibility and will give you an answer straight away.

Assuming your application is successful and you're able to produce the necessary evidence, we can advise you under the Legal Help scheme immediately.

## What legal services are covered by Legal Help?

If you're eligible, we can provide advice and assistance on most family law matters. Legal Help doesn't extend to conveyancing or Will writing services.

However, we can also advise you if your local authority is considering an application to court for a Care or

Supervision Order for your child (in a public law matter), or if you are the victim of domestic abuse.

If you're already seeking advice for domestic abuse, you won't need to produce further evidence of violence.

Similarly, you won't need to produce evidence of domestic violence for legal aid in public law matters.

Under the Legal Help scheme, we can give you general advice, write letters and negotiate on your behalf.

It's important to remember that legal help entitles you to a limited amount of free legal advice and assistance.

Whilst the advice you'll receive depends on your individual case, it doesn't cover prolonged negotiations or representation in court proceedings.

If your case involves these, your solicitor will discuss the alternative options with you.

## Legal Aid

As well as legal help, you may also be entitled to a legal aid certificate. If granted, this will enable us to represent you in court.

## Do I have to pay anything for my legal advice?

Not initially, as the Legal Aid Agency will pay us directly for the help and advice we provide to you under the scheme.

However if you recover or keep any money or property or have debts paid as a result of our advice, we must first have your legal aid bill paid or postponed. This will be done before the balance is paid to you.

This is called the 'Statutory Charge'.

## Further information

If you need to speak to a family solicitor about Legal Help, the application process or your eligibility for legal aid-funded services, call **0117 325 2929** or visit [barcankirby.co.uk](http://barcankirby.co.uk).

**BEDMINSTER** 25 North St, Bristol BS3 1EN  
**BISHOPSTON** 60 Gloucester Rd, Bristol BS7 8BH  
**QUEEN SQUARE** 49/50 Queen Sq, Bristol BS1 4LW

**KINGSWOOD** 111/117 Regent St, Bristol BS15 8LJ  
**THORNBURY** 36 High St, Thornbury BS35 2AJ

☎ 0117 325 2929   ✉ [hello@barcankirby.co.uk](mailto:hello@barcankirby.co.uk)   📍 [barcankirby.co.uk](http://barcankirby.co.uk)   🐦 [@barcankirby](https://twitter.com/barcankirby)

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