

## Do I need a solicitor or a direct access barrister?

Not all family law cases are appropriate for going straight to a direct access barrister. If you don't really know what you want, or if your case is complicated and involves collecting evidence from various witnesses, or taking opinions from a number of experts, it may be more sensible for you to instruct a solicitor to do this on your behalf. Also, if you would prefer to hand over the case for someone else to look after all of the administrative requirements for you, a solicitor is a better option because working with a barrister will require you to be able to take on the administration of the case yourself (with the barrister's guidance).

Although legal aid is no longer available for most private family law disputes (that is, those where children are not deemed to be at risk of significant harm), there are some circumstances in which it is still available, particularly if you have been a victim of domestic abuse. Direct access barristers are not able to apply for legal aid on your behalf, so if you think you might be eligible, you can either go to a solicitor who can work with legally aided clients, or check your eligibility via the government's legal aid calculator.

You can still get legal aid if you are directly involved in court proceedings with a local authority about children, so you should seek advice from a solicitor who specialises in this sort of work.

If you'd like to investigate whether your case is suitable for a direct access barrister to take on, you can give our public access clerk, Denise, a call on 020 7427 5200 and she will help you decide the best way forward.

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