

Your Questions

How can I find out if I qualify for Legal Aid?

If you already have a solicitor, they will be able to tell you if you qualify for legal aid.

If you do not have a solicitor, please contact us so we can advise you. We can assist you in applying for legal aid, if you are eligible.

I don't have a solicitor so how do I get the PDS Advocacy Unit to represent me?

You can contact us direct. We will either put you in touch with one of our PDS offices or advise you about other solicitors in your area.

I have a solicitor but want a PDS Advocate to represent me in court. How can this be arranged?

You are entitled to choose the advocate that represents you in court. Inform your solicitor which PDS advocate you would like and ask your solicitor to contact us.

Who regulates the PDS?

All of our advocates are regulated by the Bar Standards Board or Solicitors Regulation Authority and offer completely independent and impartial advice.

Contact us

Senior Clerk: **Robin Driscoll**

Tel: **020 3334 4253**

Mobile: **07468 709022**

Email: pdsclerks@legalaid.gsi.gov.uk

Website: <http://publicdefenderservice.org.uk>



Public Defender Service Advocacy Unit

Guide for Clients

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What is the Public Defender Service?

The Public Defender Service (PDS) was established in 2001 to provide criminal defence representation from offices in Cardiff, Cheltenham, Darlington, Pontypridd and Swansea.

In 2014, our Advocacy Unit was set up to provide additional representation in serious and complex cases. We are based in London but cover the whole of England and Wales.

Who can use the PDS Advocacy Unit?

Anyone facing criminal charges can use the PDS Advocacy Unit if they qualify for Legal Aid. You automatically qualify for Legal Aid if you:

- receive income-based job seekers allowance, income related employment support allowance, income support, universal credit or the guaranteed state pension credit.
- have a household disposable income below a certain threshold but you may be required to pay a contribution towards the costs of your representation.
- are under 16 (or under 18 and in full-time education).

Why choose the PDS Advocacy Unit?

We have a highly skilled team of 25 Advocates, including several Queen's Counsel. Our areas of specialism include serious fraud cases, terrorism cases, organised crime, murder, firearms and serious sexual offences.

All of our advocates have extensive experience and are highly specialised, so you can feel confident that you will be represented by an advocate who is able to deal effectively with every aspect of your case.

What service would the PDS Advocacy Unit provide for me?

We will:

- meet with you (and your solicitor if you have one) to discuss the best course of action
- advise you on the strength of the evidence against you
- provide written advice to your solicitor on how to progress your case, and
- represent you in court at every hearing up to and including the trial and any appeal.

How do I get the PDS Advocacy Unit to represent me?

If you have a solicitor acting for you in your case, inform them that you would like to use the PDS Advocacy Unit. They can contact us on your behalf and instruct us to represent you.

We will advise you (or your solicitor) on the most suitable advocate for your case and aim to ensure that you have the same advocate for every hearing until your matter is concluded.

Your solicitor will still deal with the day-to-day running of your case and carry out any casework which we advise them to undertake e.g. instructing an expert witness or taking statements from defence witnesses. Your solicitor will also be responsible for giving us a copy of all your case papers so you don't need to worry about having to do this yourself.