

GRENFELL LEGAL SUPPORT (GLS)
FAQ: INSTRUCTING A LAWYER

This FAQ is compiled from queries we have frequently encountered on the topic of instructing a lawyer.

Will one law firm cover all of my needs?

If you are instructing a lawyer, they should make it very clear which of your needs they can assist with, for example, Housing, Inquest, Inquiry, Immigration, Employment etc. There are some firms which can offer specialist support in relation to all of these areas and other firms which specialise in some and not others. A single firm may not cover all of your needs. For example, some specialist Housing lawyers may not have the expertise to deal with a Public Inquiry and vice versa.

Do I need a Housing lawyer?

The Council has a legal duty to arrange suitable accommodation for tenants from the Grenfell Tower and other evacuees. This includes short-term (emergency) accommodation and long-term housing. Where affected persons are not being housed, being offered housing in inadequate conditions, or have any other queries concerning housing, they should consult specialist housing lawyers.

I have instructed a law firm in relation to my Housing needs. Can another law firm represent me during the Public Inquiry?

Yes. You can choose who represents you in relation to the Public Inquiry. Even if a law firm is representing you in relation to your Housing needs or other issues, you can choose different firm to represent you on other matters. It is your choice.

If I simply talk to a lawyer, are they now representing me?

No. A lawyer is not your lawyer until you have formally instructed them, which will include providing a written authority allowing them to act for you and/or signing public funding forms.

I have instructed a law firm to represent me. Can I change my mind?

Yes. If you are unhappy with the lawyer/law firm you have instructed, you can change your mind. This process should be explained to you by the lawyer.

I'm unhappy with my lawyer - how do I make a complaint?

In the first instance you should complain directly to your solicitor about the poor service that you have received. All solicitors should have a procedure for handling complaints. If you have complained to your solicitor and you are not satisfied with their response, you can contact the Solicitors Regulation Authority (SRA) - telephone: 0370 606 2555 or via www.sra.org.uk/consumers/problems.page. You can also contact the Legal Ombudsman - Telephone: 0300 555 0333, or via www.legalombudsman.org.uk/?portfolio=complaint-form-legal, who can help to resolve your complaint for you.

Will I have to pay for a lawyer myself?

All law firms who have been assisting affected persons (that we are aware of) have either offered their services pro bono (for free) or will be making claims for payment from public funding ('legal aid') where it can be made. The bottom line is that affected persons should not themselves be paying for any legal advice and assistance provided.

Public funding will be made available for representation during the Inquiry process. However, the government has not yet provided full details of how this will work.

In respect of other areas of law, such as Housing, lawyers are lobbying the government to ensure that public funding is made available to all of those affected by the Grenfell fire irrespective of their financial circumstances.

My Family Liaison Officer (FLO) / a police officer has suggested a lawyer for me - Do I have to instruct that lawyer?

No, you don't have to and we believe this approach is inappropriate. You should make an *informed decision* about who to instruct and we would recommend you carefully consider the credentials of any lawyer/law firm identified by others. Take a look at the firm's website and consult the legal directories to see whether they are of high quality and suit your requirements.

Someone or some people have selected a lawyer for me - Do I have to instruct that lawyer?

No, you don't have to. You should make an *informed decision* about who to instruct and we would recommend you carefully consider the credentials of any lawyer/law firm identified by others. Take a look at the firm's website and consult the legal directories to see whether they are of high quality and suit your requirements.

I am part of a group that is instructing a lawyer - can I still have my own lawyer?

Yes, you can choose to instruct your own individual lawyer in addition.

I have met a lawyer at a GLS workshop - should I instruct them?

Lawyers you meet at any GLS workshop are for orientation and information. You should only instruct a lawyer once you have considered and researched the options. We do not endorse any particular law firms. Remember, when instructing a lawyer, there are other options and ultimately it must be your choice.

Which law firm should I instruct?

This is your choice. We do not endorse any particular law firm. We can, however, suggest the qualities of a good lawyer/law firm. In short, we believe that anyone you choose to select should embody the "3 C's": ***Credibility, Capacity and Compassion.***

Credibility

Does the lawyer you want to instruct have the experience in the area of law you require assistance with, and a recognised track record?

Capacity

Does the lawyer have support and at a firm who are sufficiently staffed to take on difficult, complex cases, and represent a number of individuals in relation to similar issues?

Compassion

Does the lawyer/law firm have a history of social justice and fully understand of your concerns?

Where can I find a list of the best lawyers?

When considering the question of who to instruct as your lawyer, we would recommend consulting the two leading legal directories in particular: "Chambers & Partners" and "The Legal 500". These two directories are well established and highly regarded. They have a list of solicitors, law firms and barristers, and identify the highest ranking lawyers by specialism. The links below will take you to some of the relevant rankings (human rights law firms):

Chambers & Partners - Civil Liberties and Human Rights:

<https://www.chambersandpartners.com/11805/10/editorial/1/1>

Legal 500 - Civil Liberties and Human Rights:

<http://www.legal500.com/c/london/public-sector/civil-liberties-and-human-rights>

Who else can help?

The following organisations provide advice and support:

INQUEST

- Address: 3rd floor, 89-93 Fonthill Road, London, N4 3JH
- Telephone: 0207 263 1111
- Email: inquest@inquest.org.uk
- Website: www.inquest.org.uk

The North Kensington Law Centre

- Address: Unit 13, Baseline Studios, Whitchurch Road, London, W11 4AT
- Telephone: 0208 969 7473
- Emergency: 07375 920 460
- Email: info@nklc.co.uk
- Website: www.nklc.co.uk

Kensington Citizens Advice

- Address: 2 Acklam Road, London, W10 5QZ
- Telephone: 0300 330 1174
- Website: www.citizensadvice.org.uk/local/kensington-chelsea/

About GLS

GLS are a volunteer service assisting bereaved families, survivors and residents with legal and pastoral needs. We provide information to affected persons and are assisting with coordinating the legal effort along with instructed law firms and other coordinating bodies. **Please note that GLS do not act as legal representatives for affected people.** The choice as to who to instruct as your legal representative is personal and only you should be making that decision. We can identify the qualities of a good lawyer and direct you to leading legal directories so that you are aware of who the leading lawyers are. We are also here to receive any feedback from people who have instructed lawyers and have any queries or uncertainty. If you have any queries or would like to get in touch, our contact details can be found below:

Email: help@grenfell-legalsupport.org

Telephone: 07387 173350 (Khatija) / 07766 001774 (Abbas)

Website: www.grenfell-legalsupport.org