

# Contact us

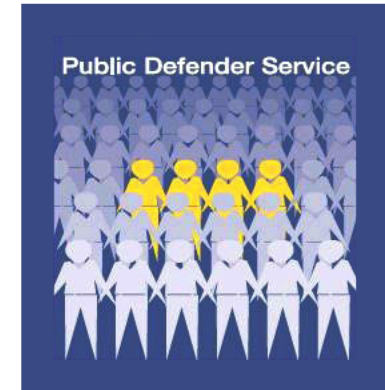
Senior Clerk: Robin Driscoll

Tel: 020 3334 4253

Mobile: 07468 709022

Email: [pdsclerks@legalaid.gsi.gov.uk](mailto:pdsclerks@legalaid.gsi.gov.uk)

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



# Public Defender Service Advocacy Unit

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# Guide for Solicitors

## 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.

## Which of my clients can use the PDS Advocacy Unit?

Any client facing criminal charges, who is eligible for legal aid, can use the PDS Advocacy Unit.

## How does the PDS Advocacy Unit work?

We operate in a similar way to barristers chambers. If you decided to instruct the PDS Advocacy Unit we would only undertake advocacy work in your client's case. You would still retain responsibility for the litigation work involved and be able to bill your work under the Legal Aid Agency's Litigators' Graduated Fee Scheme.

## Why should I instruct the PDS Advocacy Unit?

We have a team of 25 experienced barristers and Higher Courts Advocates, including seven Queen's Counsel. Our various areas of specialism range from serious fraud Very High Cost Cases to murder, firearms and serious sexual offences as well as inquests, tribunals and inquiries. Therefore, we are able to deliver a high quality service and with consistency of representation.

We are able to cover all court centres in England and Wales from the Magistrates' Court to the Supreme Court.

## Is the PDS Advocacy Unit independent of the government?

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

In addition, the PDS Code of Conduct sets out our responsibility to maintain our professional independence and not allow this to be compromised by prosecuting authorities, the courts, the Lord Chancellor, the Ministry of Justice, the Legal Aid Agency, PDS clients or any other source.

We are part of the Legal Aid Agency simply because, as salaried civil servants, we are funded by the legal aid budget.

## How does the PDS Advocacy Unit deal with conflicts of interest?

We are governed by a protocol, based on the Bar Standards Board and the Solicitors Regulation Authority guidance, which is available to solicitors who intend to instruct the PDS.

## How do I instruct the PDS Advocacy Unit?

Please contact us direct, just as you would when instructing a set of chambers.