



NICOLA HUTCHINSON
Partner / Solicitor Advocate

n.hutchinson@reeds.co.uk
07811 412 539
0117 244 3727
24hr Line: 01173 251 357
Reeds Solicitors LLP
www.reeds.co.uk

Client & Legal Team – Work Better Together

Do not bury your head in the sand - No matter what stage your case is at you need to address the case head on. Whether you are at the stage of being requested to attend a voluntary interview, under arrest, on bail, under investigation or your case has already been charged. Instructing your legal team at an early stage is vital and having a good support network around you is key.

Engagement with your legal team - build up a good rapport with your legal team. Have the conversation in relation to what to expect, how often you will hear from them, who are the individuals working on your team and what are their individual roles.

Funding of your case – There are options available to you. You may be able to apply for legal aid and have no contribution to pay, you may have to pay a contribution towards your legal aid or you may wish to instruct on a private basis. Whichever option you take, you must have a frank conversation in relation to what to expect from your legal team. This may make a difference as to how many conferences you have, the seniority of your caseworker and advocate. By ensuring you have this conversation you will be able to prepare your communications to your legal team accordingly in order to make the best use of time.

Be contactable - Stay in regular contact with your legal team. If they have scheduled conferences for specific dates and times to discuss your case, make sure that you attend and engage. Most decent legal teams are highly sought after and will be dealing with a number of other cases so re-scheduling missed appointments will cause a delay in the preparation of your case.

Gather material - This is particularly important in the pre-charge stage. After interview you will often be bailed or released under investigation for a lengthy period of time. You may feel you are in limbo but actually this is a key time period where a lot of work can be done to gather evidence and make pre-charge representations.

Preparation - For many people this is the first and last time they will be in this situation. Thorough preparation of your case from an early stage is vital. What makes cases much easier to prepare is when clients engage in the preparation. Prepare detailed note of your version of events. Solicitors should send the evidence to their clients as and when it is disclosed by the Crown Prosecution Service. They should schedule conferences with clients to take detailed instructions on their comments of the evidence at various stages. It is extremely important throughout the preparation stage that you provide your legal team with any defence witnesses. Provide their full names, addresses, email and contact number so they can be approached. Make your team aware of any issues with CCTV, ring door bell footage, telephony evidence, social media posts, medical evidence etc.

Targeted instructions on disclosure requests - Make your legal team aware of any evidence you already have. Blanket requests for disclosure on these types of cases are often met with objection by the police and Crown Prosecution Service. If we are aware this evidence is in existence already, targeted requests will have a more positive outcome.

Stigma - The Stigma attached to being accused of these types of allegations will inevitably have an impact on your mental health. It is very important to seek help from medical professionals. However, you also need to be aware that what you discuss with medical professionals will be recorded on your notes. Requests for your confidential notes can be made in criminal proceedings. Keeping your conversations in any counselling and medical appointments to how you are feeling rather than the specifics of the case makes it still possible to engage in counselling & therapy.

Be careful who you discuss your case with - No one, not even your nearest and dearest is bound by confidentiality like your legal team. We are bound by legal professional privilege but the person you might have been in a relationship with at the start of the investigation and had an acrimonious breakup with partway through will probably happily divulge private conversation you have had that may not assist your case. Choose your friends and support wisely.

Work as part of the legal team - If you trust your legal team you should be safe in the knowledge that they are doing all they can to thoroughly prepare your case to achieve the best possible outcome for you. These types of allegations are often very serious with possibly devastating consequences if the case does not go in your favour. I cannot be stressed enough how important it is to instruct a legal team that has the relevant experience, capacity and knowledge to deal with your case in the manner in which it should be.