

## Help and Advice

**Our fitness to practise process is formal because it needs to be fair to you and to safeguard your rights.**

We would recommend that you obtain independent advice about your case and decisions you need to make. The following people and organisations may be able to help.

### A trade union or professional body

If you are a member of a trade union or professional body they may be able to offer advice and/or representation. These may include:

- Unison
- Voice Scotland
- Scottish Association of Social Workers
- British Association of Social Workers
- the GMB.

### Citizens Advice Scotland

Citizens Advice Scotland offers an independent advice network. You can search for a local bureau at [www.citizensadvice.org.uk/scotland](http://www.citizensadvice.org.uk/scotland) or by calling 03454 04 05 06.

We are committed to promoting equality and valuing diversity. We want our processes to be fair, transparent, and objective.

Please contact the person who sent you this factsheet if you need this document in a different format or to discuss how we can help you further.

We want to know if you are affected by illness, disability or any other factor which may fall into the category of protected characteristics and may impact on our decision to impose a sanction on your registration in any way.

Protected characteristics can mean; age, disability, gender reassignment, marriage and civil partner, pregnancy, race, religion, sexual orientation, according to the Equality Act 2010.

## National Wellbeing Hub

The National Wellbeing Hub is a resource for everyone working in health and social care. You can visit the website at <https://www.promis.scot/> or call their helpline on 0800 111 4194.

## Workforce Specialist Service (WSS)

The WSS is a confidential multidisciplinary mental health service. It has expertise in treating regulated health and social service professionals. They specialise in caring for regulated professionals as patients and are experts at the interface between regulation, employment and mental illness and addiction. Find out more at:

[Accessing the service in Scotland \(practitionerhealth.nhs.uk\)](http://practitionerhealth.nhs.uk)

Email: [prac.health@nhs.net](mailto:prac.health@nhs.net)

Tel: 0300 0303 300

## Law centres/clinics

There are a number of law centres across Scotland that may be able to give advice. Find out more at

<http://www.scottishlaw.org.uk/lawfirms/lawcentres.html>

There are also a number of law clinics operating out of Scottish universities.

These clinics usually include students studying law who may be able to help you. You can find a list of law clinics here: <https://www.abdn.ac.uk/law/research/the-scottish-university-law-clinic-network-546.php>

We have delivered training specific to the SSSC's processes and procedures to the following organisations, who may be able to help you.

## Aberdeen Law Project

[www.abdnlawproject.com](http://www.abdnlawproject.com)

Email: [representation@abdnlawproject.com](mailto:representation@abdnlawproject.com)

Tel: 01224 272434

## Fife Law Centre

[www.fifelawcentre.co.uk](http://www.fifelawcentre.co.uk)

Email: [info@fifelawcentre.co.uk](mailto:info@fifelawcentre.co.uk)

Tel: 01592 786710

## University of Strathclyde Law Clinic

[www.lawclinic.org.uk](http://www.lawclinic.org.uk)

Email: [lawclinic@strath.ac.uk](mailto:lawclinic@strath.ac.uk)

Tel: 0141 548 5995

## **A solicitor**

There are many legal firms to choose from and you can search for a solicitor on their website [www.lawscot.org.uk/find-a-solicitor/](http://www.lawscot.org.uk/find-a-solicitor/)

You might also find it useful to search for a firm online using the words 'SSSC solicitor' or 'regulatory lawyers in Scotland'.

## **Faculty of Advocates**

The Faculty of Advocates is the professional body for advocates who are a type of solicitor. They have a Free Legal Services Unit. Find out more on their website <https://www.advocates.org.uk/search-results?query=free+legal+services+unit>

## **Paying for legal advice**

We understand that legal advice and representation may be costly. You should discuss costs with your representative directly. There might be limited funding available from the Scottish Legal Aid Board which will assist you. At the present time, we understand that legal aid is not normally available to cover our hearings process.

If you want to appeal one of our formal decisions, the appeal is to the Sheriff Courts and legal aid may be available for that. Again, this is something you should discuss with your representative.

Your home insurance may also cover some legal costs. You should check this with your insurance provider.

## **Independent advocacy**

Independent advocacy supports people to navigate systems and acts as a catalyst for change. Independent advocacy can stop situations from escalating and it can help individuals to develop the skills, confidence and understanding to advocate for themselves. Find out more at:

<https://www.siaa.org.uk/what-is-independent-advocacy/>

## **Support for students**

Most universities and colleges will offer a student advice and counselling service. You may find information about this on your university or college website or by speaking to your course leader or lecturer.

If you are unable to get legal advice and/or representation and are representing yourself, our Hearings Guide will help you understand how to prepare for, and what to expect at our Fitness to Practise Panel hearings.

## **Emotional support**

We understand that being investigated by your regulator can be worrying or stressful and that our investigations may take some time. We aim to complete our investigations as quickly as possible and you can contact your caseholder at any time for an update. You may also be able to speak to your employer,

university or college about any concerns that you have.

The following independent organisations also offer support.

### **Breathing Space**

A phone advice service offering emotional support.

Tel: 0800 83 85 87

Email: [info@breathingspacescotland.co.uk](mailto:info@breathingspacescotland.co.uk)

Web: [www.breathingspace.scot](http://www.breathingspace.scot)

### **The Samaritans (Scotland)**

[www.samaritans.org/your-community/samaritans-work-scotland](http://www.samaritans.org/your-community/samaritans-work-scotland)

Email: [scotland@samaritans.org](mailto:scotland@samaritans.org)

Tel: 0131 116 123

### **NHS inform**

Get help with your mental wellbeing at:

[https://www.nhsinform.scot/get-help-with-your-mental-wellbeing?gclid=EAIaIQobChMImvGGsYzC8wIV6RkGAB2KfwKbEAAYAiAAEgKhCvD\\_BwE](https://www.nhsinform.scot/get-help-with-your-mental-wellbeing?gclid=EAIaIQobChMImvGGsYzC8wIV6RkGAB2KfwKbEAAYAiAAEgKhCvD_BwE)