

PUBLIC ACCESS

Information for Direct Access Clients

A clear guide to public funding, suitability and how Thames Chambers handles direct instructions.

Thames Chambers is the direct access practice of Mr Mohammad Jahirul Islam, a self-employed barrister called to the Bar in 2008. He is registered for Public Access and authorised to conduct litigation, and practises in family and immigration law.

Public funding (Legal Aid)

Public Access allows a member of the public to instruct an appropriately authorised barrister directly, without first instructing a solicitor. Legal Aid is not available for work where the barrister is instructed directly on a Public Access basis. Before accepting instructions, the barrister must take reasonable steps to ensure that the client can make an informed decision about whether to apply for Legal Aid or proceed privately through Public Access.

If the circumstances indicate that Legal Aid may be available or that instructing a solicitor would better protect the client's interests, this will be explained. A client may still decide to proceed privately where it is appropriate to do so, but the basis of the instruction, the work the barrister will undertake and the client's own responsibilities will be set out clearly in the client care documentation.

What we will normally establish at the outset

- The client's identity and contact details.
- The nature of the case, the issues involved and any hearing or filing dates.
- The documents and evidence presently available.
- Whether the matter is suitable for Public Access and whether further professional support is needed.
- The scope of work Thames Chambers can undertake, the client's responsibilities and the agreed fee.

Identity and case information

Before accepting instructions, Thames Chambers may request suitable identification and evidence of address, together with sufficient information and documents to understand the matter and complete any required regulatory checks. Clients should provide accurate, up-to-date information and highlight any urgent deadlines.

SUITABILITY

Client interests and the interests of justice

Not every matter is suitable for Public Access. The barrister will consider the nature and complexity of the case, the work required, the client's ability to manage any tasks that remain their responsibility, and whether the case can properly be handled without a solicitor or another authorised professional.

A solicitor or other professional may be recommended where:

- The case is sufficiently complex that the client requires additional case management or support.
- Important procedural, evidential or administrative work falls outside the agreed scope of the barrister's instruction.
- The client would be better served by seeking Legal Aid through an appropriately authorised provider.
- Continuing on a Public Access basis would not be in the client's best interests or would risk the proper administration of the case.

Where a solicitor is recommended, the client may still ask that solicitor to instruct Mr Islam as counsel, subject to availability, professional obligations and agreement of terms.

What Public Access can include

Subject to the circumstances of the case and the agreed scope of work, Public Access services can include legal advice, drafting legal documents and representation in court. Because Mr Islam is authorised to conduct litigation, he may also be able to undertake litigation work where this is expressly agreed as part of the instruction.

Important: This document is general information about the Public Access process. It is not legal advice and does not guarantee that a particular case will be accepted. Suitability is assessed individually before instructions are confirmed.

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Regulatory details checked against the Bar Standards Board Barristers' Register (August 2026).