



FREE LEGAL ANSWERS™

TIPS FOR VOLUNTEERS

1 Frequently asked questions

We recommend that volunteers read the FAQ section on Free Legal Answers once registered. This is the 'FAQ' tab on the dashboard.

2 Notifications

Lawyers can choose how often they want to receive notifications and what kind of notifications they prefer. To do this, select the 'Notifications' tab on the dashboard, click on the red icon in the table to change them to ticks on the categories that the volunteer wishes to receive notifications on. By clicking on the text in the column marked 'Mode', volunteers can decide if they would like daily or weekly notifications, or every time a new case is added.

3 Searching & filtering questions

Questions are searchable by area of law and by date so volunteers can quickly filter to see oldest or newest questions and only view questions for a particular area of law. The 'kind of problem', 'issue with' and 'subject' headlines along with the preview function are tools to help lawyers quickly decide which questions they would like to review and answer.

4 Resources

We recommend that volunteers look at the 'Resources' tab on the dashboard. This includes information and links to useful resources regarding legal aid and the relevant legal areas covered by FLA.

5 Jurisdiction issues

Individuals from both England and Wales can submit a question. Volunteers should be aware that some areas of law, particularly housing law, are devolved in Wales. It is therefore important that volunteers ensure they confirm the client's geographic area and have an adequate understanding of the law in the client's geographic area.

6 Contacting the FLA administrator

Lawyers can contact the FLA administrator at any time if they have any concerns about a question or if there are any technical issues with the website. To contact the FLA administrator, use the purple 'Notify the site administrator about this question' button. The volunteer handbook gives examples of when you may want or need to contact the administrator.



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7 Requesting further information

Clients may not have the requisite legal knowledge to fully convey the question they seek an answer to. Volunteers are not limited to a single response, so in these circumstances, volunteers should use the dialogue box to gather additional information or context from the client.

8 Involvement of others in researching or drafting

Although there are specific eligibility criteria for volunteer lawyers, remember that others can take part in researching and drafting an answer to a legal question/problem – e.g. supervised law students, paralegals and trainees as long as the information and advice then provided via the website is approved and submitted by the registered solicitor.

9 Level of detail of answers

Some questions will only require a brief answer (eg: telling the client they need to complete a particular form) and some answers will require more detail. It is therefore hard to give general guidance about how detailed an answer should be. The most important point is that volunteers must not give advice beyond their level of competence or outside the scope of Free Legal Answers.

10 Uploading an answer as an attachment

Some volunteers prefer to type their answers in Word and then attach them as a pdf (rather than using the reply field in the question). This makes it easier for lawyers to copy and paste things and add links. Please, however, note the earlier comments about not saving confidential client information on a personal device.

11 Template answers

The same type of questions often come up (eg: tenancy deposits and standards of repair). Some lawyers prepare and keep a number of template answers which can be easily adapted and therefore questions can be answered quite quickly.

12 Anonymity

One of the advantages of Free Legal Answers is that lawyers do not need to provide their name to the client if they do not wish to. Generally, we suggest that lawyers refrain from providing their personal details. Lawyers who do provide their details should be aware of the possibility of users contacting them directly. Upon receipt of any direct communication from a user outside the FLA platform, lawyers should immediately inform the site administrator and insist upon users reverting to communicating via the FLA platform, subject only to LawWorks' site administrator granting permission to communicate outside the FLA platform.



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Reminding clients of the limitations of the service

Although the client user agreement clearly sets out the limitations of Free Legal Answers, clients do not always read this or fully understand what it means. Therefore at the end of drafting an answer to a question, some lawyers choose to remind clients that they will have no further involvement with the case, can't provide ongoing advice, casework or representation. Free Legal Answers has an 'other places to find legal help & information' section for clients so a lawyer may wish to remind the client about that.

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Further questions from a client

If a client has posted a question to Free Legal Answers more than twice in relation to the same matter, a volunteer should tell them we are unable to help further and refer them on if possible. If, after providing the client with advice, a follow-up question is posted within the message thread, it is the volunteer's discretion whether to provide the client with a further response.