



**We strongly recommend that you read the following information to understand what the procedure is before contacting an ACID Legal Affiliate team.**

Once you have made contact with an ACID Legal Affiliate, you will be asked for some information about your issue. If you have a copying issue, you can ask ACID for an Infringing Purchase Information Sheet IPIS. This will help you to collate much of the information that a lawyer will need to assess whether copying has taken place. You may wish to use your own documents as evidence and this may include access to product images, production of samples etc. You will be saving a considerable amount of your free initial time period if all the relevant information is available at the start.

Once your initial free time has expired **YOU WILL BE CHARGED FOR WORK CARRIED OUT BY A LEGAL AFFILIATE ON YOUR BEHALF.** ACID Members benefit from reduced fees with Legal Affiliates but do ensure that you are aware when you enter into chargeable time and what the fees are likely to be. You need to take this responsibility on board if you enter into a client relationship as Legal Affiliates are independent from ACID and we cannot become involved in any disputes.

Please be aware that when any client enters into a client relationship with a lawyer certain procedures and protocols will be followed. These procedures are followed by all legal firms in the UK but can seem a little daunting if you are not used to supplying this type of information. Various documents may be requested from you and if you are unsure what is required it is best to contact the legal team directly.

And finally, please remember that not all lawyers offer free initial advice and that this is a very valuable benefit. Please make the most of this time, but do not abuse it or expect miracles to happen within the free time period if your situation needs far more in depth attention. To provide this initial service at no cost, most communication is done via e-mail and the telephone. Do not expect to have a face to face meeting unless this is specifically requested and agreed.

#### **ACID MEMBERS – ACID LEGAL AFFILIATE CHARGES**

Solicitors, like any other business in the service industry, provide their time in exchange for payment. Like all solicitors they charge on a time spent basis in reference to agreed hourly rates with the client. Sometimes, they also offer a fixed fee for certain types of work.

Membership of ACID entitles you to initial free advice and a significant reduction on their standard hourly rates to those which they offer to Non ACID members. Information on these reduced charges can be directly supplied by the legal team you are dealing with.

#### **WHEN WILL YOU BE CHARGED?**

Following the initial free advice, whenever an ACID Legal Affiliate carries out work on your file then you can expect that there will be a charge. So, for example, if you call them to discuss your case, send them an e-mail, ask them to draft a letter or if they receive documents from your opponent which they need to read and consider. Essentially whenever they are engaged in working on your behalf they will be entitled to raise a charge. This is the same with the majority of law firms in the UK.



## **HOW DO LAW FIRMS CHARGE FOR THOSE TYPES OF TASKS?**

In reference to hourly rates Legal Affiliates like all solicitors charge what is known as “units” of time for standard communications such as e-mails and letters sent and received, telephone calls and working on documents. Those units are calculated in 6 minute “bites”, so there are 10 units in an hour of chargeable time. So if you send a routine e-mail it will be recorded as a unit of time or a one tenth charge of the hourly rate.

Some ACID Member clients do not expect to pay for advice once they instruct an ACID Legal Affiliate. There is sometimes an unrealistic approach to legal advice and services. For example drafting letters or agreements involves a physical action and naturally that is when a law firm will charge. Again, like any other service provider, they provide a service in exchange for payment and it is no different from paying for a meal in a restaurant or a train ticket to travel. Don't forget that some ACID members would pay more than their annual subscription for an hour's IP specialist advice if they went directly to an IP firm.

Occasionally through no fault of either an ACID member or a Legal Affiliate team, the relationship between a client and their solicitor does not always run as smoothly as hoped. From a client's perspective this could be anything from an optimistic expectation of time limits for return of telephone calls or emails to being advised that they do not have a case regarding a copying incident. From a lawyer's perspective this could be a client failing to provide information when requested or not settling their account. However some misapprehensions are more frequently found and from a law firm's perspective it is important to enlarge upon these so that there is clarity between the two parties regarding expectations.

**Non-payment of invoices** – Occasionally, a client will instruct some work to be carried out and then not pay once that work has been completed, even where there are no issues with the level or standard of work produced. Lawyers are the same as any other business, it is inconvenient when those to whom they have provided a professional service in good faith refuse to pay. Most businesses will expect to be paid for providing their own goods or services, in the same way lawyers expect to be paid for their services.

**Initial contact** – For initial enquiries a Legal Affiliate team will aim to return a phone call or contact a member within 24 hours of the query being notified. Often people will become frustrated if they cannot speak to them immediately or if their call is not returned almost instantly. The reason that a time period of 24 hours is set is because it is not always possible to speak to a member instantly or within a short time after they call. For example lawyers may be in client meetings, in Court or working to a tight deadline advising other clients. Please be aware that Legal Affiliates work on behalf of many other individuals and corporations too and are not exclusive to ACID members.

**Reviewing documents for clients.** At times an enquiry relates to the review of an important document, or some important advice at very short notice, for example an hour before going into a meeting to finalise an important document and requiring advice on the effect of that document. In order for any lawyer to fully consider the implications, and advise you, or any client, correctly they need to have sufficient time to properly consider the matter and any relevant documents; otherwise they cannot correctly discharge their professional obligations. The bottom line is that any lawyer has to be accountable for the legal advice they give. Business entrepreneurs make significant decisions based on professional consideration. Hurried advice is not good advice.



**It is important to note that Legal Affiliates are completely independent businesses and not part of ACID. When an ACID member contacts a Legal Affiliate or enters into a client relationship, ACID are not privy to any information on the issue – it remains completely confidential between the Legal Affiliate and the client.**

ACID will therefore be unaware of any successful settlements, ongoing issues between a client and a Legal Affiliate or any complaints regarding services received. If a client is unhappy with their relationship with a Legal Affiliate, the first step is to convey this to the law firm involved. If you also wish to inform ACID of your complaint please be aware that we will have no knowledge of any of the details that have led you to be unhappy with your service. ACID can convey to a law firm that a complaint has been made, but we cannot enter into any talks regarding the issue or act as a mediator between client and ALF. If you did wish to take your complaint further you would be able to contact the Legal Ombudsman who would advise you.

Very rarely we are contacted by ACID Members who find that they are unable to take advice from a Legal Affiliate because of a 'conflict of interests'. If this does occur, please be aware that we will not know what the conflict is and would not expect to be given this sort of information by a Legal Affiliate. In these very rare cases an ACID Member would need to seek advice from another Legal Affiliate.

The comments below are quite commonly received by Legal Affiliates;

- Can you have a look at this 20 page agreement now as I have a meeting in 2 hours?
- Can't you just add a couple of clauses to this agreement?
- I don't have to pay you because I am an ACID Member
- Can't you just write a letter for me – or tell me what to put in a letter?
- I didn't expect to have to pay for a letter
- I e-mailed/telephoned you half an hour ago and I have not had a response
- Please remember that the work a lawyer carries out for you needs to be legally correct – and that takes time!