



News Release

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Treat police cautions with caution, warns Warrington defence solicitor

Hundreds of people accepting a police caution may be catastrophically damaging their future career prospects, warns a defence solicitor from QualitySolicitors Forshaws Davies Ridgway in Warrington.

Last year more than 200,000 people in England and Wales received a formal police caution instead of having their case heard in a criminal court. The practice has now come under the spotlight as the Government launches a major review, following accusations that cautions are not being correctly applied just to low-level, first time offenders who admit guilt.

Gary Heaven, a partner and head of criminal law at QSFDR, believes many people arrested for low-level crime end up accepting a police caution as an easy way out, without realising that it shows up on all Disclosure and Barring Service (DSB, formerly CRB) checks - potentially barring people from professions such as teaching, medicine, the law and work with children.

He said: "The key point to remember, if you're ever arrested, is that you are entitled to free legal advice. Some people are so shell-shocked at being taken to a police station they accept a police caution far too readily, without proper advice, when in fact there may be insufficient evidence against them or a perfectly legitimate defence.

"Of course in circumstances where an offence has clearly been committed, a caution is the best outcome for a defendant. But in my experience, people very often accept cautions even though they don't necessarily accept they are guilty of an offence. They think it's the lesser of two evils and a quick passport out of an unpleasant situation.

"But formal police cautions are always recorded and show up in any DSB or sex offender register checks. It is foolish to accept guilt, without proper legal advice, when it could potentially be catastrophic for your future career."

The Ministry of Justice review is due to examine the impact of cautions on career prospects as well looking at the inconsistent or inappropriate use of cautions by different police forces. The Ministry said it would involve the police, Crown Prosecution Service, victims' organisations, the judiciary and the legal community.

The review is due to report back at the end of May.

An emergency helpline is operated by QualitySolicitors Forshaws Davies Ridgway, day or night, which can summon a solicitor to a police station immediately. The helpline is 07808 140659 or to make an appointment, please ring 01925 230000. Website www.qualitysolicitors.com/fdr. Follow us on Twitter: @QSFDR

EDITOR'S NOTES:

About Forshaws Davies Ridgway

- Forshaws Davies Ridgway is a full service legal practice with offices in Warrington, Stockton Heath and Frodsham, divided into QualitySolicitors Forshaws Davies Ridgway, providing individual legal services and **fdr**, a specialist commercial practice, at 21 Bold Street, Warrington.
- 18 Partners
- Over 100 staff
- Services include: Commercial Law, Conveyancing, Criminal, Family, Litigation, Wills & Probate.

About QualitySolicitors:

- Launched in 2010, QualitySolicitors is a group of law firms across the country working as part of the QualitySolicitors brand. Only one firm per local area is selected to become a QS partner. Customer feedback forms an integral part of the selection process.
- QualitySolicitors' national network of lawyers consists of over 400 branches across England and Wales, including 150 Legal Access Points in WHSmith stores.
- QualitySolicitors lawyers are experts in their fields dealing with both consumer and SME legal matters. QualitySolicitors offer a personal, local service but with the assurance of a recognised national brand.
- In 2011 QS secured equity investment from Palamon Capital Partners, a private equity house with a £700m fund.
- QualitySolicitors has recently announced an exclusive partnership with US firm LegalZoom. QS firms will operate as panel members for all consumer and business LegalZoom work following their launch in the UK.
- QualitySolicitors launched a multi-million pound, national campaign in 2012, designed to shake up the legal world and help make solicitors' services more accessible to everyone. The campaign is the largest in the history of the legal profession. Running across multiple outlets it includes peak terrestrial television adverts, posters and billboards, press advertising, a social media campaign, and live stunts around the country to showcase the local expertise of each QualitySolicitors firm. In addition, QualitySolicitors is encouraging all

local solicitors, whether they are part of the group or not, to rally together against 'supermarket law' with a call to arms of, 'Be vocal. Keep solicitors local'.

Issued by

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On behalf of Quality Solicitors Forshaws Davies Ridgway