# CONTENTS

1. Understanding the legal system  
   - Legal terms explained  
   - Using the legal system to resolve disputes  
   - The structure of the court system  
   - Criminal cases  
   - Civil cases  
   - The county court  
   - Small claims in the county court  
   - The magistrate's court  
   - The youth court  
   - The Crown Court  
   - The High Court  
   - The Family Division  
   - The Queens Bench Division  
   - The Chancery Division  
   - The Court of Appeal  
   - The House of Lords  
   - The Court of First Instance  
   - The European Court of Justice  
   - The European Court of Human Rights

2. Legal Help  
   - Solicitors  
   - Choosing the right firm  
   - Using a solicitor  
   - Other sources of legal advice  
   - Legal aid  
   - What does the scheme cover  
   - Legal problems caused by the scheme
Financial conditions for the scheme 26
Income 26
Extra costs that to pay 27

3. Solving disputes before legal action 27

Payments into court 27
Timing of court action 28
Damages 28
Damages for criminal injury 28
Procedures 29
Benefits and award limits 29
Compensable costs 29
Emergency awards 30
Funding 30
Appealing against a decision 30
What to do if you are sued 36

4. Procedure in the Crown Court 33

The jury 33
Complaining about jury service 35
Inside a Crown Court 35
Court etiquette 35
The judge 37
Barristers 37
Solicitors 37
Clerks 38
The usher 38
The Crown Prosecution Service 38
The defendant 39
Witnesses 39
Applying for the claim form to be issued    66
If the case is not defended               67
If the defendant is defending the case    67
The day of the hearing                   69
Preparing a case                         70
The final hearing                        71
Appealing against a decision             71
Enforcement of orders                    72

Glossary of terms
Useful addresses
INTRODUCTION

Without doubt, the legal system is complex and daunting and most people who go to court to either resolve disputes or to defend themselves when sued, will use a solicitor or barrister. Such professionals do not come cheaply. This fact, above all, can influence a person’s decision whether or not to go to court.

More and more people are choosing to go down the route of Do-it-yourself representation. These people are known as litigants-in-person. More and more courts are sympathetic to self representation and judges will often help the litigant.

This book attempts to throw light on the whole legal process by adopting a specific approach towards explaining the processes involved. Chapter 1 deals with an outline of how the system works and who is who within the various courts. The purpose is to provide a backdrop which should prove invaluable to the litigant. Chapter 2 explains the role more fully of solicitors and barristers and also points to other sources of legal help available. Chapter 3 outlines the importance of finding a solution to problems before they get to court, as this avoids an often long and costly battle. Chapters 4 to 6 outline the processes within the various courts and puts forward case studies which should help the litigant in person gain an idea of the processes involved.

Overall, this brief but invaluable guide to conducting your own court case, presented through building blocks to the actual presentation of a case, should prove an indispensable aid to representing yourself in court.