

# Redefining Expert Witness Instruction

Q&A with Dr Russell Keenan, Director of the Expert Witness Gateway



## Where did the idea for the Gateway come from?

**Dr Russell Keenan (RK):** With many years of experience of expert witness work I felt I had made my part of the process reasonably efficient. I had become aware and frustrated at how time consuming and what I thought was inefficiencies the whole process of expert witness and solicitor interaction. From initial instruction to multiple emails to arrange an expert meeting or court attendance I felt there should be a more efficient way.

Also, for experts there is a significant amount of medicolegal time that isn't report writing and I felt that this could be made more efficient for example dealing with diary management, invoices, actually getting paid and dealing with accounts.

## How does it work in practice for a solicitor starting a case?

**RK:** The aim was to transform the way solicitors work with experts and make the process simple and quick. We visualised a judge asking for a specialist expert report. The solicitor can advise the court within 1 minute the names of experts in that discipline that are available on the Gateway, the costs, current turnaround times, CV and provisionally instruct the expert at the click of a button.

The only caveat is that experts must first review case details to confirm no conflict of interest. Solicitors create a secure case workspace and select relevant specialties. Experts are automatically notified when instructed and see all court deadlines. Documents are uploaded once, with solicitors controlling expert access. All responses are timestamped and auditable, and built-in messaging keeps communication within the case. Additional parties can be added with read-only access, ensuring everyone views the same live record rather than separate threads.

## And for experts?

**RK:** Experts maintain a profile reflecting their practice, supported by a simple calendar for court dates, conferences, and report deadlines. Automatic notifications help ensure timelines are met. Each case keeps all instructions, documents, and

messages together with a full audit trail. Two-factor authentication provides state-of-the-art security. When workloads rise, a "pause new instructions" toggle protects existing commitments without cutting communication.

Getting paid has long been a headache for experts, especially with complex multi-party invoicing in Family Court cases. The Gateway automates invoicing and guarantees payment within 30 days. Income records are easily accessible and downloadable for accountants or can be copied directly into accounting software such as Xero, turning tax return preparation from hours into minutes.

## Data protection and security are perennial concerns. What's built in?

**RK:** Data security is state-of-the-art. Developing the Gateway shifted my view on balancing access with protection—recent Legal Aid chaos only reinforced this. Security comes first, even if it takes a few extra seconds. All data is encrypted in transit and at rest, with two-factor authentication, regular backups, and a defined incident-response plan. Built from the outset for UK GDPR and the Data Protection Act 2018, our aim is simple: keep data confidential, preserve integrity, and ensure availability when it matters most.

## Multi-party and high-volume cases are especially messy. How does the Gateway help?

**RK:** Transparency and simple organisation. You can add parties with appropriate permissions so they see the same document index, instructions and timeline—but can't inadvertently edit or fork the record. If a matter proceeds to court, exporting the chronology and key artefacts is simple. The platform ends discussions about who sent what, when, and which version applies. All communications are auditable.

## What distinguishes this from "just another portal"?

**RK:** Two things set it apart. First, lived experience – it was built from years of real frustration with the failures everyone knows at 11 pm before a hearing. Second,

real-time single-record working – any update to instructions, bundles, hearing dates or parties is instantly visible to all authorised users, with alerts and a time-stamped audit trail. No lost emails, no outdated copies. We're not replacing professional judgement; we're protecting it by keeping the live record accurate at every moment.

## What's next on your roadmap?

**RK:** We're developing tools to streamline expert meetings. Solicitors can set a date range, and the Gateway checks experts' calendars to suggest times when all are available. Once confirmed, the meeting is added automatically to each expert's synced calendar, with notifications and reminders to prepare. Built-in video conferencing and real-time multilingual transcription make meetings seamless, and transcripts are instantly available for review and approval while details are still fresh.

## Final thought for readers who feel the current model "just about works"?

**RK:** "Just about" is not good enough when the stakes are this high. The traditional model tolerates avoidable risk – lost messages, wrong versions, missed dates. All these challenges cause delay for the courts which adds to costs. The Expert Witness Gateway is simply a better way: one case, one record so one truth. It helps experts focus on evidence and solicitors on strategy, which is ultimately better for clients and the court.

**Dr Russell Keenan** is a Consultant Paediatric Haematologist with over thirty years' clinical experience and extensive medico-legal practice. A Cardiff University Bond Solon (CUBS) accredited expert, he has given evidence across family, civil, criminal and coroner jurisdictions. As Director of the Expert Witness Gateway, he helped shape the platform after years of frustration with inefficiencies and outdated instruction models.



Tel: 0333 188 9897  
www.expertwitnessgateway.co.uk