**600 word version**

**Liking, listening, learning and the law.**

**Working with others in legal workplaces**

[Working with others](https://www.open.edu/openlearncreate/enrol/index.php?id=8449) is a free online course designed to provide individual legal professionals with valuable guidance on working effectively with clients, colleagues and others. It includes written information, a range of interactive activities, and audio-visual clips from experts as well as a variety of legal professionals. Upon completion of the course, there is an optional e-certificate to download, making it ideal for Continuing Professional Development purposes. The course forms the second part of the [Fit for Law series of courses](https://www.open.edu/openlearncreate/course/index.php?categoryid=362) which are designed to promote psychologically and emotionally healthier ways of working in law. The first part, [Managing and Understanding Yourself](https://www.open.edu/openlearncreate/course/view.php?id=3476) was launched in 2020. The third part, focusing on the role of employers and organisations, will be launched in 2024/25.

In terms of working effectively with clients, Working with others explores the emotional aspects involved in interactions between lawyers and clients. It draws on clear evidence that all such encounters, regardless of whether they are with a large corporate organisation or an individual experiencing personal challenges, have an emotional component. It discusses how understanding this can assist in effectively communicating with clients either in-person or by other means. It considers the value of empathy and provides tips on managing clients’ emotions as well as their expectations. At the same time, it emphasises the need for self-care when investing emotional labour into your work.

The course then moves on to consider how to work effectively with colleagues. Working with others encourages you to assess your existing workplace relationships and considers ways to enhance these. It explores working in a legal team, including team roles and the impact of the various emotions teamwork can generate. It also considers healthy ways to deal with conflict within teams. The course acknowledges the important role which leadership and management plays within workplace cultures by also providing guidance on developing leadership skills. At the same time, it also acknowledges that everyone has a role to play. Providing suggestions for supporting colleagues generally and specifically those with mental health conditions. The course also refers to the need to work with others and recognise their perspectives and emotional responses.

Working with others was created as an evidence-based resource by four academics, in conjunction with the charity LawCare. The creators and authors are Dr Emma Jones, Senior Lecturer in Law at the University of Sheffield; Dr Neil Graffin, Senior Lecturer in Law at The Open University; Dr Rajvinder Samra, Senior Lecturer in Health at The Open University; and Dr Mathijs Lucassen, Senior Lecturer in Mental Health at The Open University. All four actively research in areas relating to mental health and wellbeing. Dr Jones is a former solicitor in private practice who now researches the role of wellbeing and emotion in legal education and the legal profession.

The content of Working with others is based on the findings of research conducted with legal professionals in the UK and Ireland. The findings have been published in the Bristol University Press book ‘[Mental Health and Wellbeing in the Legal Profession](https://bristoluniversitypress.co.uk/mental-health-and-wellbeing-in-the-legal-profession)’.

Overall, Working with others hopes to encourage positive organisational and cultural change in the legal workplace through upskilling legal professionals and supporting them to develop their emotional competence and resilience. For more information on Fit for Law generally, please visit [www.lawcare.org.uk/fitforlaw](http://www.lawcare.org.uk/fitforlaw).

By Dr Emma Jones, Senior Lecturer in Law and Director of Student Wellbeing for the School of Law, University of Sheffield.