17. Evidence of character: evidence of the good character of the accused

This chapter discusses the circumstances in which, in criminal proceedings, evidence of the good character of the accused may be adduced because of its relevance either to a fact in issue or to his credibility. It addresses the following issues: Why should an accused be allowed to call evidence of his previous good character? Where an accused has previous convictions, in what circumstances might it be acceptable for a judge to tell a jury that they should consider the accused as a person of good character? Where an accused has no previous convictions, in what circumstances might it be acceptable for a judge to refuse to tell a jury that they should consider the accused as a person of good character?
17. Evidence of character: evidence of the good character of the accused