

COMPLAINTS PROCEDURE

We are committed to providing a quality legal service to all our clients. Consequently, it is essential, when something goes wrong or any client believes they have reason to complain, that we have an effective procedure to assist complete and early resolution of the problem. Only by doing so can we hope to maintain the quality standards we have set and improve them by learning from what may have gone wrong and what our clients tell us.

The Procedure

Although not essential, in making your complaint it would be helpful to us if you could provide details of your concerns in writing (if you have not already done so). If you would prefer not to have to do this, please arrange to see us and we will be pleased to take details from you.

What will happen next

1. We will register your complaint on our Register (for monitoring and management information purposes).

Timescale: Within 2 days of receipt of complaint.

2. We will acknowledge receipt of your complaint, set out our understanding of it and request your confirmation or seek any necessary clarification. We will also confirm who will deal with your complaint.

Timescale: Within 3 days of receipt of complaint.

3. We will then commence investigation your complaint. This may involve one or more of the following steps:

- a) We will ask the case worker who acted for you to provide us with a response to your complaint within 5 days.

Timescale: Within 1 day

- b) We will then examine the response and the file as against your complaint and, if necessary, speak to the case worker.

Timescale: Within 3 days of receipt of the response and file

- c) The firm's client care partner will consider your complaint in the light of what the file reveals and the case worker's response.

Timescale: Within 7 days

4. The firm's client care partner will then write to you with a detailed response and inviting you to meet with us to discuss and hopefully resolve your complaint.

Timescale: Within a further 3 days

5. If a meeting between us take place we will write to you to confirm what took place and detailing any agreed solution that was reached.

Timescale: Within 2 days of the meeting

6. If a meeting is declined or is for some reason impractical we will write to you again in an endeavour to resolve the complaint to our mutual satisfaction.

Timescale: Within 5 days of the meeting being declined

7. If, at a meeting or from your written reply to our detailed written response, you remain dissatisfied with what we have said and how we propose resolving your complaint, we will arrange for our decision to be reviewed. This may happen in one of the following ways: -

a) Our own review of our handling of your complaint and why you are dissatisfied with our decision

Timescale: Within 5 days

b) By arranging for someone else in the firm who is entirely unconnected with the complaint to review how it was handled and the decision taken.

Timescale: Within 10 days

c) By asking our local law society or another local firm of solicitors to review our handling of, and the decision on, your complaint (if they are willing to do this).

Timescale: Within 10 days

8. After the review has taken place you will be informed of the outcome. This will review our initial handling of the complaint and our decision on it

Timescale: Within 5 days of the conclusion of the review.

9. If you remain dissatisfied at the end of our complaints process, you would then be at liberty to contact the Legal Ombudsman, provided you are an individual, a personal representative of a deceased person, a "micro-enterprise" (having fewer than 10 employees and annual turnover or assets not exceeding 2,000,000 Euros), a charity or club/association with annual income not exceeding £1 million, or a trustee of a trust with assets not exceeding £1 million. The Legal Ombudsman is an Alternative Dispute Resolution (ADR) entity, with whose procedures solicitors' firms are obliged to comply. The Legal Ombudsman can investigate complaints up to six years from the date of the problem happening or within three years of when someone should have found out about the problem. However, if we send a final written response to your complaint within eight weeks of receiving it, the time limit for you to refer the matter to the Legal Ombudsman would be one year from the date of that final response.

If you would like more information about the Legal Ombudsman, their contact details are as follows:

- Visit www.legalombudsman.org.uk
- Call 0300 555 0333 between 8.30am to 5.30pm (calls to 03 numbers will cost no more than calls to national geographic numbers (starting 01 or 02) from both mobiles and landlines. Calls are recorded and may be used for training and monitoring purposes.)
- For minicom call 0300 555 1777
- Email enquiries@legalombudsman.org.uk
- Postal address: Legal Ombudsman, PO Box 6806, Wolverhampton, WV1 9WJ

Alternative complaints resolution bodies also exist and are competent to deal with complaints about legal services, should both you and our firm wish to use such a scheme at the end of our internal complaints process. They provide Alternative Dispute Resolution (ADR) services. Under the provisions of the EU Directive on Consumer Alternative Dispute Resolution, to pursue this process you would have to be a "consumer", namely an individual acting for purposes which are wholly or mainly outside your trade, business, craft or profession.