

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 investigate and provide an 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.

We promise to deal with your complaint promptly, fairly and free of charge. We have 8 weeks to deal with your complaint from the date we receive it.

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).
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 (the complaint handler).

Timescale: Within 10 working days of receipt of complaint.

3. We will then commence investigation of 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.
 - b) We will then examine the reasons and the file as against your complaint and, if necessary, speak to the case worker.
 - c) The complaint handler will consider your complaint in the light of what the file reveals and the case worker's response.
4. The firm's complaint handler will then write to you with a detailed response and, if appropriate, either a proposal to resolve your complaint or an invitation to meet with us to discuss and hopefully resolve the complaint.

Timescale: Within 15 working days of receipt of complaint

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

Timescale: Within 10 working 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 10 working 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: -

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

Timescale: Within 10 working days

- 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 15 working days

- 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). This might take the form of mediation or some other type of alternative dispute resolution.

Timescale: Within 20 working days

8. After the review has taken place you will be informed of the outcome.

Timescale: Within 10 working 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 million Euros), a charity or club/association with annual income of less than £1 million, or a trustee of a trust with assets of less than £1 million.

The time limit for referring a complaint to LeO will be not later than one year from the date:

- of the act or omission being complained about; or
- when the complainant should have realised that there was cause for complaint

LeO will have discretion to accept out-of-time complaints in circumstances where it deems it "fair and reasonable to do so".

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 six months from the date of that final response.

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

- Website - www.legalombudsman.org.uk
- Telephone - 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.
- E-mail - enquiries@legalombudsman.org.uk
- Postal address - Legal Ombudsman, PO Box 6167, Slough, SL1 0EH

The Solicitors Regulation Authority can help you if you are concerned about our behaviour. This could be for things like dishonesty, taking or losing your money or treating you unfairly because of your age, a disability or other characteristic. You can raise your concerns with the Solicitors Regulation Authority: www.sr.org.uk The Solicitors Regulation Authority, The Cube, 199 Wharfside, Birmingham B1 1RN Tel: 0370 606 2555.

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. Small Claims Mediation is one such body, details of which can be found at www.small-claims-mediation.co.uk ; and another is Ombudsman Services, details of which can be found at www.ombudsman-services.org . 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.

