

CLIENT COMPLAINTS PROCEDURE

We are committed to providing a high-quality legal service to all our clients. When something goes wrong, we need you to tell us about it. This will help us to improve our standards. We deal with all complaints fairly, promptly and at no extra cost to you.

If at any point you become unhappy with the service we provide to you, then please inform us immediately so that we can do our best to resolve the problem for you.

1) What is a complaint?

A report by a client that their expectations of what they consider to be a good service have not been met.

2) Making a complaint

You can register a complaint with the person dealing with your matter or their supervisor, details of which are given in your initial Client Care Letter.

In the first instance, we would prefer if you write to us with full details of your complaint so that we have a good understanding of the issues being highlighted.

3) Investigating the complaint

- a. We will acknowledge the complaint within seven days which allows for any postal delays and notify you who will be handling your complaint.
- b. We will record your complaint in our central register and open a file for your complaint. We will conduct a full investigation and an independent review of the matter.
- c. We aim to respond in full within 28 days. However, if the complaint is of a more complex nature, we will require more time, but we will let you know when you will receive a full response. In all cases, your complaint will be dealt with within eight weeks of receipt.
- d. We may also invite you to meet with the Supervisor to gather more information and resolve the matter.
- e. We will reply to you, usually in writing following the outcome of the review of the complaints investigated.

If still unresolved at this stage, you may take the complaint to the Legal Ombudsman or, in accordance with the Alternative Dispute Resolution Regulations to an Alternative Dispute Resolution (ADR) Scheme Provider. We will issue a final letter advising you of this. If we are unable to resolve your complaint, then you can have the complaint independently looked at by the Legal Ombudsman. The Legal Ombudsman investigates complaints about service issues with lawyers.

4) Legal Ombudsman

The Legal Ombudsman is the independent body established by the Office for Legal Complaints under the Legal Services Act 2007 to deal with complaints against Solicitors.

The Legal Ombudsman investigates complaints about the quality of service provided by lawyers. This includes matters such as delays, failure to keep clients informed, costs disputes, or whether a service was carried out properly.

The Legal Ombudsman cannot investigate issues relating to professional misconduct, breaches of professional rules, or disciplinary matters. These issues are dealt with separately by the Solicitors Regulation Authority (SRA), which regulates solicitors and law firms in England and Wales.

Before it will consider a complaint the Legal Ombudsman generally requires that the firm's internal Complaints Procedure (outlined above) has been exhausted. If the Legal Ombudsman is satisfied that the firm's proposals for resolving a complaint are reasonable, it may decline to investigate further. From 1st April 2023 the Legal Ombudsman expects a complaint to

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be made to them within one year of the act or omission being complained about, or within one year of the date when you should reasonably have known that there was cause for complaint.

You must also refer your complaint to the Legal Ombudsman within 12 months of the date of our final written response to your complaint following our internal complaints procedure.

The Legal Ombudsman has discretion to extend these time limits in certain circumstances, but this discretion is exercised sparingly.

The Legal Ombudsman's address and contact details are:

Legal Ombudsman, PO Box 6167, Slough, SL1 0EH

5) Alternative Dispute Resolution Schemes

Alternative complaints bodies such as Ombudsman Services, exist which are competent to deal with complaints about legal services should both you and our firm wish to use such a scheme.

We do not currently agree to use an alternative dispute resolution scheme for complaints, as the Legal Ombudsman scheme is available and we are bound by our Regulatory Code to comply with the Legal Ombudsman.

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