

## Complaints Handling Procedure: A guide for clients

### Step 1 – Response time 48hrs

If you are dissatisfied with any aspect of our service, please raise the matter with the fee earner handling your case.

They should acknowledge your communication, normally within 2 working days, will discuss the matter with their supervising solicitor or a Director and give you a response.

In the case where the situation can be resolved simply and/or quickly by the fee earner with no material disadvantage to you, the response will be direct from the fee earner by telephone, email or letter.

If you remain dissatisfied with the response you should clearly set out the reasons why and if appropriate, the fee earner will respond again within a further period of 48 hours.

If you feel able to do so, you should always first explain to the fee earner the reason for your continued dissatisfaction and give them the opportunity to resolve the matter.

Depending on the nature of the complaint it may be appropriate to deal with the fee earner on several occasions under the Stage 1 process until you are satisfied that it has been dealt with to your satisfaction. However, you will have the right to refer the matter to a Director under the procedure at Step 2 below at any time after our first response.

Your complaint will automatically be escalated to Step 2:

- if the matter is more serious (such as an allegation of repeated poor service)
- where the matter requires investigation.
- Where the firm has done something wrong which may lead to a material loss for you

**Step 2 – Acknowledgment time 5 working days**

**Response time 10 Working Days thereafter**

Your complaint will be dealt with by a Director of the firm who will acknowledge your complaint within 5 working days then investigate the matter and provide you with a written response to your complaint within 10 working days thereafter. If appropriate, this time period will not start until the expiry of stage 1.

Before doing so they may want to talk to you to confirm the precise nature of your complaint and/or require you to put this in writing so that they can objectively investigate all matters and provide a measured and fair response based upon agreed criteria.

That response may include without limitation and in appropriate cases:

- An apology;
- An offer to make redress for any loss to you;
- A goodwill gesture;
- A description of appropriate remedial action where the problem is not beyond correcting
- An offer of Alternative Dispute Resolution;
- A description of changes made to our systems and procedures to avoid a future recurrence;
- In cases where we have done something wrong confirmation of this and a description of further action that you may take;
- a request for the provision of further information or evidence from you to support your complaint;
- Options for you to consider and, if appropriate, accept.

Occasionally we may consider that your complaint is without reasonable grounds or that it is disproportionate to the response received from us or the circumstances generally, in which case we will tell you.

You will be entitled to make further comments and representations orally or in writing. In some cases we may insist that your response is in writing for clarity. Further required responses from this firm will be in writing and in the same timescales stated above for Stage 2 complaints.

Once all matters have been dealt with we will send you a final letter which is stated to be such and which invites you to confirm that the matter has been resolved to your satisfaction. We may suggest Alternative Dispute Resolution ('ADR') via a third party provider but you will still be entitled to bring your complaint to the Legal Ombudsman before or after any agreed ADR.

### **Step 3 – Legal Ombudsman – 6 months from Final Letter**

We have eight weeks to resolve your complaint after which you are entitled to bring the matter to the Legal Ombudsman, normally within a period of 6 months from our final response, although the Ombudsman has discretion to extend this time limit.

In exceptional circumstances the Ombudsman may be prepared to consider your complaint before the expiry of the eight week period mentioned above. It may also consider the matter sooner if there has been an irretrievable breakdown of the relationship between you and this firm. Details of how to complain to the Ombudsman were included in your copy of our terms of business sent at the outset of this matter. However, to reiterate, the ombudsman can be contacted here:

Email

[Enquiries@legalombudsman.org.uk](mailto:Enquiries@legalombudsman.org.uk)

Post

Legal Ombudsman

PO Box 6806

Wolverhampton

WV1 9WJ

Website:

[www.legalombudsman.org.uk](http://www.legalombudsman.org.uk)

#### Professional courtesy

We expect to meet the highest standards of professional service and will do what we can to resolve your complaint fairly and amicably. You can expect us to always treat you with courtesy, respect and politeness.

We expect our clients to treat us in the same way.

We do not tolerate harassment, abusive or threatening behaviour towards our staff and in appropriate cases we reserve the right to cease acting for you and to make a report to the police or other appropriate authority.