

## **COMPLAINTS HANDLING PROCEDURE: INFORMATION FOR CLIENTS**

The firm is bound by the Solicitors Regulations Authority's Code of Conduct. Chapter 1 of the Code deals with complaints handling. A copy of the Code may be obtained from [www.sra.org.uk](http://www.sra.org.uk).

### **General**

All complaints will be thoroughly investigated in accordance with the firm's complaints procedure. Often, complaints made to solicitors are minor, relating to, for example, perceived lack of politeness, a lack of communication or delay. Sometimes the cause for complaint concerns the quality of service. There may be occasions when the complaint does not appear to have any real substance.

Even in those circumstances, it is important to ensure that any complaint is properly handled.

### **Complaints Procedure**

This is the firm's written complaints procedure that we are able to provide to clients on request.

### **Receipt of Complaint and Investigation**

If a client raises a service-related or other complaint with the fee earner with day-to-day responsibility for the matter, the fee earner will within 7 days of receipt of the complaint acknowledge it and inform the client that the Managing Director (MD) aka the, complaints partner, will consider the complaint. The MD should then deal with the complaint with a view to resolving it to the client's satisfaction.

If the MD is unable to resolve the complaint to the client's satisfaction, the client will then be referred to a formal complaints process.

If a service-related or other complaint is received by the MD direct from the client, the MD will normally attempt to resolve the complaint directly.

Once a complaint is referred to the complaints partner, the complaints partner will tell the client in writing how the complaint will be handled and in what timeframe they will be given an initial and/or substantive response. In most cases a full and substantive response will be given within 28 days of receipt of the complaint by the complaints partner, but this may be extended in certain circumstances, for example, due to the nature and or complexity of the complaint.

### **Explanation of Outcome of Complaint**

As soon as the investigation has been completed, the client will be given an explanation of the outcome of the complaint, either oral or written.

### **Response to Client**

A response will be given to all complaints from clients. Where a complaint is upheld, appropriate forms of response include:

- an apology at the earliest opportunity coupled with an explanation of what, if anything, went wrong, any consequential changes made to the firm's procedures or systems and assurance that the cause of the complaint will not happen again;
- prompt and proportionate redress which may, where appropriate, include the reduction or cancellation of a bill; and

•• notification to the client of his or her right to see another solicitor and obtain advice on whether we have been negligent. Any impact on the client and inconvenience resulting from the complaint needs to be considered as well as what went wrong initially.

### Legal Ombudsman

In all cases, the client has the right to complain to the Legal Ombudsman Service. Details of how to do so are set out below. Once the firm's internal procedure has been completed, the client has the right to complain to the Legal Ombudsman.

The client must allow the firm at least eight weeks to resolve his or her complaint before involving the Legal Ombudsman but subject to that, the client should contact the Legal Ombudsman as soon as he or she can. The time limits for making a complaint are six years from the act or omission giving rise to the complaint, or three years from when the complainant should reasonably have known that there were grounds for complaint. In addition, the complaint should be made to the Legal Ombudsman within six months of the completion of the firm's formal complaints procedure. The Legal Ombudsman will not accept complaints where the act or date of awareness was before 6 October 2010.

The Legal Ombudsman may be reached as follows:

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

Email: [enquiries@legalombudsman.org.uk](mailto:enquiries@legalombudsman.org.uk)

P. O. Box 6806,  
Wolverhampton  
WV1 9WJ

Telephone: 0300 555 0333

You may also raise a complaint with the Solicitors Regulation Authority ('SRA') which can be contacted at [www.sra.org.uk](http://www.sra.org.uk) or by telephone on 0370 606 2555