



COMPLAINTS PROCEDURE FOR CLIENTS

We are committed to providing a high quality legal service and to dealing with all our clients fairly. We acknowledge that we may not always get it right so if something has gone wrong, including in relation to the bill, we need you to tell us.

At the start of your case

At the outset of the case you will be given the name and contact details of the person dealing with your case, along with the details of their supervisor.

Initial Complaint Handling

1 How do I make a complaint?

- 1.1 In the first instance you should raise any dissatisfaction with the person dealing with your matter.
- 1.2 If they are unable to resolve the issue for you or you are uncomfortable raising it with them you can put your complaint in writing to (by letter, fax or email) or by speaking with our complaints partner Lynn Murray or in her absence the deputy complaints partner Paula Marshall, whose contact details are: at Denning House, 84 High Street, Cranleigh, Surrey, GU68AH or by fax to 01483 273934 or telephone 01483 268847 or by e-mail to Lynn@lynnmurray.co.uk or Paula@lynnmurray.co.uk
- 1.3 To help us to understand your complaint, and in order that we do not miss anything, please tell us:
 - 1.3.1 your full name and contact details
 - 1.3.2 what you think we have got wrong
 - 1.3.3 what you hope to achieve as a result of your complaint, and
 - 1.3.4 your file reference number (if you have it)
- 1.4 If you require any help in making your complaint, we will try to help you.
- 1.5 We will write to you within five working days acknowledging your complaint, enclosing a copy of this policy.
- 1.6 We will appoint a member of the firm (“the Complaint Investigator”), most likely the Team Leader responsible for supervision of your case handler or if they are not available, another senior team member to review your matter.
- 1.7 The Complaint Investigator will investigate your complaint within 8 weeks of receipt of your complaint in writing. This will usually involve:
 - 1.7.1 reviewing your complaint
 - 1.7.2 reviewing your file(s) and other relevant documents, and

- 1.7.3 speaking with the person who dealt with your matter
- 1.7.4 inviting you to a meeting to discuss, and hopefully, resolve your complaint within 14 days of sending you the acknowledgement letter. You do not have to attend if you do not wish to or if you are unable to. We will be happy to discuss the matter with you on the telephone.
- 1.8 We may also need to ask you for further information or documents. If so, we will ask you to provide the information within a specific period of time
- 1.9 Within 10 working days of the meeting, the Complaint Investigator will write to you to confirm what took place and any solutions agreed with you.
- 1.10 We will update you on the progress of your complaint at appropriate times.
- 1.11 If you do not require a meeting, or it is not possible, the Complaint Investigator will write to you at the end of our investigation to tell you what we have done and what we propose to do to resolve your complaint.

2 What if I am not satisfied with the outcome?

- 2.1 If you are unhappy with the outcome of our complaints handling procedure please first let us know and our Client Care Partner or the Deputy Client Care Partner will review the matter within 21 days of receiving your request for a review, confirming our final position on your complaint and explaining the reasons.
- 2.2 If you are still unhappy you can have the complaint independently looked at by the 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 may:

- Investigate the quality of professional service supplied by a solicitor to a client.
- Investigate allegations that a solicitor has breached rules of professional conduct.
- Investigate allegations that a solicitor has unreasonably refused to supply a professional service to a prospective client
- Investigate allegations that a solicitor has persistently or unreasonably offered a professional service that the client does not want.

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. You will have to bring your complaint to the Legal Ombudsman within 6 months of receiving a final response from us about your complaint. The Legal Ombudsman expects complaints to be made to them within a year of the date of the act or omission about which you are concerned or within a year of you realising there was a concern. You can contact the Legal Ombudsman:

- 2.2.1 by post at PO Box 6167, Slough, SL1 0EH
- 2.2.2 by telephone: 0300 555 0333, or

2.2.3 by email: enquiries@legalombudsman.org.uk

Further details are available on the website: www.legalombudsman.org.uk.

3 What will it cost?

- 3.1 We will not charge you for handling your complaint.
- 3.2 Please note that if we have issued a bill for work done on the matter, and all or some of the bill is not paid, we may be entitled to charge interest on the amount outstanding.
- 3.3 The Legal Ombudsman service is free of charge.

4. Who can Complain

- 4.1 A complainant to the Legal Ombudsman must be one of the following:
 - a) An individual;
 - b) A micro-enterprise as defined in European Recommendation 2003/361/EC of 6 May 2003 (broadly, an enterprise with fewer than 10 staff and a turnover or balance sheet value not exceeding €2 million);
 - c) A charity with an annual income less than £1 million;
 - d) A club, association or society with an annual income less than £1 million;
 - e) A trustee of a trust with a net asset value less than £1 million; or a personal representative or the residuary beneficiaries of an estate where a person with a complaint died before referring it to the Legal Ombudsman.
- 4.2 If you do not fall into any of these categories, you should be aware that you can only obtain redress by using our Complaints Handling Procedure or by mediation or arbitration, or by taking action through the Courts.
- 4.3 Prospective Clients:

A complaint can also be made by a prospective client if we have:

 - Unreasonably refused a service to a complainant;
 - Persistently or unreasonably offered a service that the complainant does not want.

5. Alternative Dispute Resolution

- 5.1 Alternative complaints bodies (such as Ombudsman Services - www.ombudsman-services.org) exist which are competent to deal with complaints about legal services should both you and our firm wish to use such a scheme.
- 5.2 Please note that we do not agree to use Ombudsman Services.

6. Continual improvement

- 6.1 We seek at all times to give our clients the best possible service. Your service issue or complaint will be recorded on our central register and will be used to improve our service to our clients by identifying the cause of any problems and correcting unsatisfactory procedures. Please be assured that we very much value both your business and your feedback."