

Complaints Handling Procedure

We are committed to providing a high-quality legal service to all our clients. We are constantly reviewing our procedures and looking for ways to improve the service we offer to our clients. If something goes wrong, or you are not satisfied with the level of service you receive, we need you to tell us about it so that we can work with you to resolve the matter to everyone's satisfaction and also help us to improve our standards.

The name of the Client Relations Partner is Roger Pitts.

You are entitled to complain, this can include a complaint about the firm's bill. You are entitled to a copy of the firm's Complaints Handling Procedure upon request.

Asking for a copy of this procedure does not represent a complaint.

You are obliged to comply with our Managing Unreasonable Behaviour towards our Staff and Partners Policy, which may be found on our website.

A Complaint

A complaint must be made by the client and cannot be made by anyone else.

Your complaint must be in writing and include all issues you wish to bring to the attention of the fee earner and/or Client Relations Partner and by making your complaint you understand and accept that no other matters issues or facts can thereafter be complained of in relation to the same matter in which we act.

In circumstances where you initially make an oral complaint this firm will request that you put it in writing. If you are unable to put your complaint in writing due to a previously disclosed vulnerability or disability, we will make suitable adjustments to the process. This will be conducted on an individual basis. References to 'in writing' should be read accordingly.

The Stages which you must follow:

1. Tier One

- You must first complain to the person who is handling or handled your matter.
- It is worth noting that if you become frustrated with a particular element of our service you should raise this in the first instance with the Fee Earner and/or their immediate supervisor. This is because these are the people who need to know about your frustrations and can quickly take steps to put matters right.
- Asking for or being supplied with a copy of this procedure is not taking the matter to the Client Relations Partner.

If you do not then take the complaint to the Client Relations Partner within 8 weeks of the date of the final communication with the person handling your matter, then your complaint will be resolved to your satisfaction and is finalised.

2. Tier Two

- If you have attempted to resolve your issues with the Fee Earner/Department, but you are not satisfied, you should contact the Client Relations Partner who will deal with it in the manner set out below.
- In asking for the referral of your complaint to the Client Relations Partner you should explain why your complaint has not been resolved to your satisfaction.
- You should note that new issues cannot be added if they were already known to you at the time of the complaint.

Tier Two Explanation

- If we have to change any of the timescales below, we will write to you and explain why.
- The timescales below will only apply from the day after our offices reopen if a complaint is received when our offices are closed.
- If you need more time, please contact us and explain why.
- All timescales are given in working days and they are cumulative.
- The date of receipt of communications from us -
 - Sent by post will be deemed to be received 2 working days after dispatch.
 - Electronic Communications will be deemed to be received the next working day.

Tier Two Procedure

We will acknowledge your complaint

We will commence investigation of your complaint, and make such further investigations as we deem appropriate including requesting clarification.

Request for Clarification from you

If we are unclear about anything in your complaint or after initial investigation we will write, telephone, or e-mail you to ask you to clarify and/or explain the details which are unclear, or to confirm our understanding of your complaint. Alternatively, we may invite you to attend our offices for a discussion.

Warning: The Effect of Failure to Respond to a Request for Clarification

Where we inform you that we require further information/explanation from you to allow us to investigate your complaint, but you fail to provide the further information/explanation requested, you agree in order to bring finality within the 8 week period allowed to investigate a complaint

1. your complaint is withdrawn;
2. you have no complaint;
3. you have no right to ask for a review;
4. And the complaint is resolved to your satisfaction.

You must respond to the request for further information/explanation within

5 days

Complaints Handling Procedure

Written Response to Complaint

We will write to you to inform you of the outcome of the investigation and give you our response.

If a meeting is held to go through your complaint and to give our response, we will write to you to confirm what took place and outcome.

Review

If you are still not satisfied with our response, you **must** ask us to review our response and **you must give reasons** why you believe our response is **incorrect**.

Repetition of the complaints already dealt with or complaining about something else is not requesting a review. In such circumstances no review will occur.

If you need more time to ask for a review, then please contact us with your reasons and the extra time required.

The time allowed to ask for a review from the date of receipt of our original response 5 days

If you ask for a review but do not give any reason or explanation as to why we need to review our response to your complaint, it will be held to have been resolved and our complaints procedure finalised.

If you **do not** ask us to review our response, you accept that you are satisfied with the outcome. Your complaint is resolved and our complaints procedure is finalised as at the date of our response.

Review Procedure

Our Client Relations Partner will review in line with your request for a review of our response and advise you of the outcome.

We may and at our discretion arrange for someone who has not been involved, but within the firm to review it.

We will let you know the result of the review at the end of the review process and will write to you confirming our final position.

Your complaint and our complaints procedure will then be finalised and concluded as at the date of the communication of the result of our review.

Should you fail to object to the outcome of our response by communicating that dissatisfaction or to asking for a review as above within 8 weeks of the date of your original Complaint or extension of time for dealing with your complaint then you agree your complaint has been resolved to your satisfaction.

At the Conclusion of Our Complaints Procedure

If the matter is resolved, you have no right to refer the matter to the Legal Ombudsman.

At the conclusion of this process if you are (1) an individual or sole trader, (2) a business with less than 10 employees and a turnover less than €2 million), (3) small charities and clubs/associations with an annual income net of tax less than £1 million, (4) trustees of a trust with an asset value of less than £1 million (5) beneficiaries of an estate and if you are still dissatisfied you have a right to complain to the Legal Ombudsman who may be contacted, at Legal Ombudsman, PO Box 6167, Slough, SL1 0EH Tel: 0300 555 0333; enquiries@legalombudsman.org.uk (email); www.legalombudsman.org.uk. (website)

Before accepting an unresolved complaint for investigation, the Legal Ombudsman will check that you have tried to resolve your complaint with us first.

The Legal Ombudsman's time limits for accepting a complaint are:

- Within six months of receiving a final response to your complaint; and
- No more than one year from the date of the alleged act/omission; or
- From when you should reasonably have known there was cause for complaint.

Objecting to this firm's bill

You may have a right to object to this firm's bill by applying to the court for an assessment under Part III of the Solicitors Act 1974, but

- a. if you exercise this right, it will preclude a complaint to the Legal Ombudsman, and
- b. if all or part of a bill remains unpaid, the firm may be entitled to charge interest

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 the following web address gives you further information <http://www.sra.org.uk/consumers/problems/report-solicitor>.

Continuous Improvement Process

Once we have resolved the complaint with you, we will review our systems and processes to see if there are any changes or improvements, we can make to avoid a repeat of the circumstances you have complained about.