Complaints Policy

As a firm we are committed to providing a high-quality legal service to our clients. If something goes wrong, we need you, the client, to tell us about it. This will help us to improve and maintain our standards.

Our complaints procedure

If in the unfortunate instance you have a complaint about any issue that it is important to you then we encourage you to tell us about it.

Depending on the nature of the complaint we will try to rectify matters as quickly as possible.

Initially we will try to deal with the complaint at the level it is made. That is, we hope that the complaint can be dealt with by the person or supervisor of whom it was made. However, it is your complaint and if you are unhappy with the way it is dealt with OR you wish to proceed with it at a higher level then your complaint will be referred to the Complaints Manager.

When this happens, we will send you a letter acknowledging your complaint and ask you to confirm or explain the details set out. We will also advise you of the person who will be dealing with your complaint in our letter to you.

What will happen next?

Your complaint will then be investigated in the following way:

- The complaint will be passed to the Complaints Manager Jessica Lewis.
- She will then speak to the member of staff/fee earner involved and ask them to respond to the complaint within 5 days.
- She will then examine their response and the information in the complaint file.
- The Complaints Manager will then invite you to meet her to discuss and hopefully resolve the complaint. If you are not able to attend a meeting, the discussion can take place by telephone. This will normally be done within 5 days of the Complaints Manager receiving all the available information.
- Within 3 days of any meeting/telephone discussion the Complaints Manager will write to you to confirm what took place and any solutions that were agreed as a result.
- If you do not want this meeting/telephone discussion, or it is not possible, the Complaints Manager will send a detailed reply to you following receipt of the complaint and after reviewing all available information. This will include his suggestions for resolving the matter. She will do this within 5 days of completing the investigation.

What if you are not happy with the outcome?

At this stage if you are not satisfied you can contact us again. We will then arrange to review our decision. This will happen by:

Another senior person will review the Complaints Manager's decision within 10 days of you contacting the firm.

We will write to you at the end of the review, confirming our final position on the complaint and explaining our reasons.

If any of the above time-scales change, we will let you know and explain why.

If you are still not satisfied you can contact the Legal Ombudsman at PO Box 6167, Slough, SL1 0EH. Tel: 0300 555 0333. Or you can email them at enquiries@legalombudsman.org.uk. Website: www.legalombudsman.org.uk.

The time limit if you wish to complain to the Legal Ombudsman is six months from the end of our complaints process.

If you choose to complain direct to the Legal Ombudsman without first contacting us the time limits are:

- six years from the date of act/omission, or

- three years from when you should have known about the complaint

Please note that from 1st April 2023 the above time limits are changing. From 1st April 2023 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. The requirement to refer your concerns to the Legal Ombudsman within six months of our final written response to you about your complaint remains the same.

The Legal Ombudsman will not accept complaints where the act or date of awareness was before 06 October 2010.

Please note:

1. If your complaint is specifically about our bill, you have the right to object to it and apply for an assessment of it under part III of the Solicitors Act 1974. If you should choose to exercise this right, and the court is assessing our bill, you may be unable to use the Legal Ombudsman service.
2. If you are complaining as a business client, unless you are a "micro business" (as defined by the European Union), you may not be able to use the Legal Ombudsman scheme, and should check the guidance on Legal Ombudsman's website.
3. If you refer your complaint to the Legal Ombudsman as a trustee/personal representative(executor/administrator) or beneficiary of the estate/trust of a person who, before they died, hand not referred the complaint to the Legal

Ombudsman the period runs from when the deceased should reasonably have known there was cause for complaint; and when the complainant (or the deceased) should reasonably have known there was a cause for complaint will be assessed on the basis of the complainant's (or deceased's) own knowledge, disregarding what the complainant (or the deceased) might have been told if he/she had sought advice.

4. If the Ombudsman considers there are exceptional circumstances (e.g. serious illness or you were still within the time limits when you made your initial complaint to them) then he/she may extend any of the above time limits to the extent that he/she considers fair.

If we have to change any of the timescales above, we will let you know and explain why.

We will also provide you with the details of an Alternative Dispute Resolution (ADR) approved body that is competent to deal with complaints about legal services. The matter can be referred to them if we both agree to use the scheme. We do not agree to use the scheme but are obliged from 1st October 2015, under European DIRECTIVE 2013/11/EU to make you aware of an ADR approved body.

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. For more details visit https://www.sra.org.uk/consumers/problems/report-solicitor/

What we hope we will achieve by dealing with your complaint

We are always disappointed when a complaint is made but it is hoped that the outcome of this procedure will ensure that:

a) The cause of the problem has been identified

b) You get a prompt response;
c) You get an assurance that the matter is being reviewed;
d) You are notified as soon as is possible of the outcome.
e) You are satisfied that the complaint has been dealt with seriously;

It is also vital that firm learns from its mistakes.

It is hoped that you will be satisfied with the fee earner and continue with the file. In some circumstances if the solicitor/client relationship has broken down completely then it may be better for another fee earner to take over the file. If the fee earner does continue with the file, every effort will be made to repair any damage in our relationship with you.