

## Complaints Procedure

We are committed to providing a high quality legal service to all our clients. We constantly monitor our service and seek to improve it. It is very important to us to know whether or not you are satisfied with our service. Any complaint about the quality of our service or our fees or charges will be considered in accordance with this procedure.

We will ensure that your complaint is dealt with promptly, fairly and free of charge.

### Our complaints procedure

If you have a complaint, you should contact the fee earner handling your matter or their supervisor. If you prefer not to contact them directly, please contact our Client Care Partner by writing to our Southampton office: F.A.O Client Care Partner at Clarke Willmott LLP, Burlington House, Botleigh Grange Business Park, Hedge End, Southampton SO30 2AF.

### What will happen next?

- 1 We will send you a letter acknowledging your complaint and if necessary, we may ask you to clarify some details. We will also let you know the name of the person who will be dealing with your complaint. You can expect to receive our letter within **2 working days** of us receiving your complaint.
- 2 We will record your complaint in our central register (for monitoring and management information purposes) and open a separate file for your complaint.
- 3 We will investigate your complaint by reviewing your file and speaking with those who represented you. **Within 4 weeks** of receiving your complaint, we will respond in writing to the concerns you have raised. If for any reason it is not possible to provide our response in that time period, we will write to you explaining why and when you can expect to hear from us.
- 4 If, having received our written response, you remain dissatisfied with our service or the manner in which your complaint has been addressed, you can ask that your matter be reviewed by our Client Care Partner. They will review your complaint and within 2 weeks confirm to you the firm's final position.
- 5 If you are still not satisfied, you may be able to ask the Legal Ombudsman to consider your complaint. The Legal Ombudsman is the independent organisation which handles complaints against solicitors. The Legal Ombudsman service is open to all members of the public, very small businesses, charities, clubs and trusts. For more information including who may use their services and the time periods for involving them please contact the Legal Ombudsman:

PO Box 6167

Slough, SL1 0EH

Tel: 0300 555 0333

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

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

**Please note there are time limits that you must meet before the Legal Ombudsman will investigate your complaint.**

The act or omission you wish to complain about must have happened after 5 October 2010, or, if it happened on or before 5 October 2010, you must only have become aware of it after 5 October 2010.

You must refer your complaint to the Legal Ombudsman no later than:

- **one** year from the act or omission; or
- **one** year from when you should have reasonably known there was cause for complaint.

In addition, you must contact the Legal Ombudsman no more than six months after the date of our final response to your complaint - otherwise they may be unable to investigate your complaint. If you are concerned about meeting this deadline, please call the Legal Ombudsman - 0300 555 0333.

- 6 **If we do not hear from you 28 days from the date of our letter at number 3 above, we will consider that response to be our final response and will close your complaint. Your time limit to take your matter to the Legal Ombudsman will be six months from the date of that letter.**
- 7 Alternative complaints bodies also exist which are competent to deal with complaints about legal services, should both you and we wish to use them. If we are unable to satisfactorily resolve your complaint through our internal complaints procedure we will give you the name and website address of an alternative complaints body and let you know whether we agree to use them.
- 8 If your complaint relates to a contract which we entered into online or by other electronic means, you may be able to submit it to a certified alternative dispute resolution (ADR) provider in the UK via the EU 'ODR platform' at <http://ec.europa.eu/odr>. The ODR platform, which is available for cross-border and domestic disputes, is an interactive website offering a single point of entry to consumers and traders seeking to resolve disputes relating to online contracts for goods or services. We would still need to agree to use any ADR provider which you identified using the ODR platform.
- 9 You may have a right, under Part III of the Solicitors Act 1974, to ask the court to assess whether the charges in our bill are reasonable. However, the Legal Ombudsman may not be able to consider a complaint about our bill if you have applied to the court for the bill to be assessed.