

Policy: Complaints policy for clients

A complaint

We consider that a complaint is an oral or written expression of dissatisfaction which alleges that the complainant has suffered, or may suffer, financial loss, distress, inconvenience or other detriment.

Our complaints policy

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 will be considered in accordance with this policy.

A complaint by a potential client who is dissatisfied with our decision not to provide a service to them will also be considered in accordance with this policy.

Our complaints procedure

If you have a complaint, which you have not been able to resolve with the fee earner concerned or their supervising partner, please contact their Team Manager or Tim Hayden, our Client Care Partner. He can be reached at our office at Blackbrook Gate, Blackbrook Park Avenue, Taunton, TA1 2PG or by phone on 0345 209 1724.

Tim Hayden will liaise with the Team Manager in charge of the team involved in your complaint to ensure prompt action.

Our aim is to resolve all complaints as soon as possible and in any event within the 8 weeks maximum period allowed by the Legal Ombudsman

What will happen next?

- 1 We will send you a letter acknowledging your complaint and if necessary 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.
- 3 We will investigate your complaint and write to you within 15 working days. This may involve one or more of the following steps:
 - 3.1 We may need to discuss your complaint with the member of staff who acted for you and/or the supervising partner.
 - 3.2 We may need to review your file and any other relevant documents.

If for any reason it is not possible to complete our investigation in that time period, we will write to you explaining why and when our investigations will be completed.

- 4 In most instances we will invite you to meet either the Team Manager or the Client Care Partner to discuss and hopefully resolve your complaint. If you have told us you do not wish us to arrange a meeting with you or if it is not possible to do so, we will send you a detailed reply including our proposals to resolve the matter.
- 5 Within 2 working days of the meeting, we will write to you to confirm what took place and any solutions we have agreed with you.
- 6 If you do not want to come to a meeting, we will send you a detailed reply to your complaint. This will include our suggestions for resolving the matter. This will happen within 5 working days of your request to us to resolve your complaint in this way.
- 7 At this stage, if you do not consider our response to be satisfactory, you can write to us again. Our Client Care Partner will then review your complaint within 10 working days.
- 8 We will let you know the result within 5 working days of the end of the review. At this time we will write to you confirming our final position on your complaint and explaining our reasons.

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

- 9 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 and very small businesses, charities, clubs and trusts. For more information on their complaints procedure, including who may use their services and the time periods for involving them visit:

The Legal Ombudsman at:

PO Box 6806

Tel: 0300 555 0333

Wolverhampton Birmingham WV1 9WJ

www.legalombudsman.org.uk

Please note the 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:

- six years from the act or omission; or
- three years 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.

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.

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.

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.

[BP.P08]

Last updated: June 2016