

COMPLAINTS PROCEDURE

Our Complaints Policy

We are committed to providing a high-quality legal service to all our clients. When something goes wrong we need you to tell us about it. This will help us to continually monitor and improve our standards.

We are further committed to eliminating discrimination and promoting equality and diversity in our own policies, practices and procedures and in those areas in which we have influence. This applies in our dealings with members of the firm (which includes employees, partners and any self employed person engaged by the firm) and other solicitors, barristers, clients and third parties.

Our Complaints Procedure

If you have a complaint, please contact us with the details.

What Will Happen Next ?

1. We will send you a letter acknowledging your complaint and asking you to confirm or explain the details set out. We will also let you know the name of the person who will be dealing with your complaint and confirm what will happen next. You can expect to receive our letter within two working days of us receiving your complaint.
2. We will record your complaint in our central register and open a separate file for your complaint. We will do this within one working day of receiving your complaint.
3. We will then start to investigate your complaint. This will normally involve one or more of the following steps:
 - 3.1 In the case of any complaints involving work undertaken by Deborah Nigh (“Deborah”) or a member of staff or their conduct, we will pass your complaint to Katharine Summers (“Katharine”), a Principal, within three working days;
 - 3.2 In the case of any complaints involving work undertaken by Katharine or her conduct, we will pass your complaint to Deborah, a Principal, within three working days;
 - 3.3 Katharine/Deborah will ask the member of staff against whom the complaint is made to reply to your complaint within five working days;

- 3.4 Katharine/Deborah will then examine their reply and the information in your complaint file, and, if necessary, she may also speak to them. This will take up to three working days from receiving their reply and the file.
4. Katharine/Deborah will then invite you to a meeting to discuss and hopefully resolve your complaint. She will do this within three working days.
5. Within two days of the meeting, Katharine/Deborah will write to you to confirm what took place and any solutions she has agreed with you.

If you do not want a meeting, or a meeting is not possible, Katharine/Deborah will send you a detailed written reply to your complaint. This will include her suggestions for resolving the matter. She will do this within five working days of completing the investigation.

6. At this stage, if you are still not satisfied, you should contact us again. We will then arrange to review our decision. This will happen in one of the following ways:
 - 6.1 We will ask our local Law Society or another local firm of solicitors to review your complaint within ten working days. We will let you know how long this process will take;
 - 6.2 We will invite you to agree to independent mediation within five days. We will let you know how long this process will take.
7. We will let you know the result of the review within five 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 (“the Final Written Response”).
8. If we have to change any of the timescales above, we will let you know and explain why.
9. We will not charge you for the costs of handling a complaint.

What If You Are Still Not Satisfied?

10. If we are unable to settle your complaint using our internal complaints process, you have a right to complain to the Legal Ombudsman, an independent complaints body, established under the Legal Services Act 2007, that deals with legal services complaints.

Normally, you have six months from the date of receiving a final written response from us about your complaint in which to complain to the Legal Ombudsman.

Legal Ombudsman

PO Box 6806

Wolverhampton

WV1 9WJ

Telephone: **0300 555 0333**

Email address: **enquiries@legalombudsman.org.uk**

Website: **www.legalombudsman.org.uk**

Alternative complaints bodies such as the Centre for Effective Dispute Resolution (“CEDR”), incorporating IDRS (website: www.cedr.com/idrs) exist which are competent to deal with complaints about legal services should both you and our firm wish to use such a scheme. We agree to use such a scheme as CEDR.

11. If your complaint is about a bill rendered by us and you are not satisfied with the Final Written Response, then you have a right to object to the bill by applying to the Court for an assessment of the bill under Part III of the Solicitors Act 1974. The Legal Ombudsman may not deal with a complaint about a bill if you have applied to Court for assessment of that bill.

12. If the Legal Ombudsman is unable to deal with your complaint, then you can complain to the Legal Complaints Service, whose details are set out below:-

Legal Complaints Service

Victoria Court

8 Dormer Place

Leamington Spa

Warwickshire

CV32 5AE

Helpline: 0845 608 6565

Email: enquiries@legalcomplaints.org.uk