

OUR COMPLAINTS PROCESS

We always aim to give you the best possible service. However, if at any point you become unhappy or concerned about the service we are providing then you should tell us so that we can do our best to resolve the problem.

You should contact the person who is working on your case first of all and hopefully any issues can be resolved at this point. If this does not resolve the problem you should then contact the Partner, whose name will have been notified at the outset of the transaction. The complaint does not have to be put in writing, although setting out clearly the issues and the action you wish us to take may help us to resolve your concerns more quickly. Making a complaint will not affect how we handle your case.

If matters are not resolved you can contact the Solicitors Regulation Authority to discuss your concerns.

<http://www.sra.org.uk/consumers/prolems/report-solicitor.page>

Before accepting a complaint for investigation the Legal Ombudsman will check that you have tried to resolve your complaint with us first. If you have, then you must take your complaint to the Legal Ombudsman within six months of receiving a final response from us, and no more than six years from the date of the issue and no more than three years from when you should reasonably have known that there was cause for complaint.

www.legalombudsman.org.uk

Our full complaints procedure is as follows:

Client Complaint Information

Policy

We take very seriously all expressions of dissatisfaction from our clients.

Informal verbal complaints should be addressed to your solicitor in the first instance. If you are not satisfied with their proposals, then the matter should be taken up with the Complaints Partner. The name of that Partner will have been given in your initial client care letter, but if you are unable to locate this, you can ask your solicitor or a member of our support staff. If the matter cannot be resolved informally with your solicitor, it would assist investigations if you were to fully detail your concerns in writing so there is less room for misunderstanding your concerns and requirements. The Legal Ombudsman (see below) also recommends that you put your complaint to us in writing, clearly stating 'Formal Complaint' at the top of your letter and that you keep a copy (see the example suggested by the Legal Ombudsman on

their website entitled "Putting your complaint in writing" – the website details are set out below). You should also keep copies of everything, including any replies you receive from us.

Response Times

Written complaints will be acknowledged within seven days of receipt whereby the name of the person responsible for handling the complaint will be confirmed. A full reply will be sent as soon as the matter has been investigated and our proposals for dealing with your concerns have been agreed upon. In any case, we will always endeavour to provide a full response within 21 days of our acknowledgement. If that is not possible, an interim response will be given explaining why it is not possible to meet this deadline, when we expect our investigations to be completed and a response finalised. We should provide a response to all complaints within eight weeks.

Unresolved Issues

If, in the unusual event we are unable to resolve the matter to your satisfaction and/or we have not resolved it to your satisfaction within the timescales referred to above, you are able to take the matter up with the Legal Ombudsman. At the same time as providing our full response and/or at the conclusion of all steps taken to deal with your concerns, we will remind you of this right. Please note that you must make a formal complaint against us before you can take it to the Legal Ombudsman.

You can obtain more information about complaints, and what the Legal Ombudsman service can do, on their website at: <http://www.legalombudsman.org.uk>, under the tab 'Information for Consumers'. The website also sets out contact details for the Legal Ombudsman:

Address: PO Box 15870, Tamworth, B77 9LE, e-mail: enquiries@legalombudsman.org.uk; Telephone: 0300 555 0333.

If you wish to involve the Legal Ombudsman*, you should do so no later than six months after the date of our final written response to your complaint, or within a year of the act or omission about which you are complaining occurring (or you becoming aware of it). If your complaint relates to our bill, then you may have the right to have the bill assessed under the Solicitors Act 1974 (Part III).

Management

All complaints (written or verbal) are recorded and logged centrally to enable us to detect recurring problems and trends. In recording such information we will comply with our obligations under the Data Protection Act 1988. As necessary, we will implement corrective action in response to individual complaints and improvement measures to prevent adverse trends and correct recurring problems. In this manner, we aim to constantly improve the service we provide.

** Please note however that some clients may not have the right to complain to the Legal Ombudsman, for example:*

- *most businesses (unless they are defined as micro enterprises (being "a micro-enterprise within the meaning of Article 1 and Article 2(1) and (3) of the Annex to Commission Recommendation 2003/361/EC, as that Recommendation had effect at the date it was adopted"))*
- *large charities or clubs, or*
- *trustees of trust with a large asset value.*