

Complaints Handling Policy

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 improve our standards.

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

What will happen next?

- We will send you a letter acknowledging receipt of your complaint within seven days of receiving the complaint.
- We will then investigate your complaint. This will normally involve passing your complaint to our client care partner, Tim Barker, who will review your matter file and speak to the member of staff who acted for you. If your complaint relates to a matter involving Tim Barker, or if he is not available (e.g. because of annual leave etc), the matter will be referred another partner, Graham Crouth, to deal with.
- He will then invite you to a meeting to discuss and hopefully resolve your complaint. If this is not convenient to you he will discuss the matter with you over the telephone, and hopefully resolve the complaint. He will do this within 14 days of sending you the acknowledgement letter.
- Within seven days of the meeting or telephone discussion, Tim Barker or Graham Crouth will write to you to confirm what took place and any solutions that were agreed with you.
- If you do not want a meeting and/or it is not possible to discuss the matter, either Tim Barker or Graham Crouth will send you a detailed written reply to your complaint, including their suggestions for resolving the matter, and we will aim to do this within 21 days of sending you the acknowledgement letter.
- At this stage, if you are still not satisfied, you should contact us again and we will arrange for another partner or someone unconnected with the matter at the firm to review the decision or, if appropriate and with your consent, we can arrange for another local solicitor or someone experienced in mediation to review the decision.
- We will write to you within 14 days of receiving your request for a review, confirming our final position on your complaint and explaining our reasons.
- If we have to change any of the timescales above, we will let you know and explain why.
- We have eight weeks to consider your complaint. If we have not resolved it within this time you may complain to the Legal Ombudsman.

NB. The term days refers to working days.

Complaints to the Legal Ombudsman (LeO)

Who can make a complaint to LeO?

Members of the public who have a problem with their legal service provider can complain to LeO. The Legal Ombudsman prefers that you approach them directly, but you can ask a friend, relative or anyone else to get in touch for you. If you use another service provider to complain to LeO, the service provider may charge you a fee. If you want another person to act on your behalf you will need to advise LeO that the person has your permission to speak to the Legal Ombudsman directly.

You can also complain if you are, or represent, any of the following:

- (a) A business or enterprise that was a micro-enterprise when you made a complaint to the service provider;
- (b) a charity with an annual income net of tax of less than £1 million when you made a complaint to the service provider;
- (c) a club, association or organisation, the affairs of which are managed by its members or a committee or committees of its members, that had an annual income net of tax of less than £1 million when you made a complaint to the service provider;
- (d) a trustee of a trust that had an asset value of less than £1 million when you made a complaint to the service provider;
- (e) a personal representative or a beneficiary of an estate of a person who, before he/she died, had not made the complaint to the Legal Ombudsman.

For (e) above the condition is that the services to which the complaint relates were provided by the service provider to a person who has subsequently died; AND had not, by his or her death, already referred the complaint to the Legal Ombudsman.

The Legal Ombudsman cannot help if you have a disagreement with another beneficiary or executor.

Timescale for complaining to LeO:

Ordinarily, you can ask LeO to look at your complaint if it meets ALL three of the steps below:

1. The problem or when you found out about it, must have arisen after 5 October 2010;
2. You are referring your complaint to the Legal Ombudsman within either of the following: Six years of the problem happening or three years from when you found out about it, and;
3. You are referring your complaint to LeO within six months of our final response to the complaint.

If your complaint does not meet all of these time limits LeO may not be able to investigate it.

Contact details for the Legal Ombudsman:

P O Box 6806
Wolverhampton
WV1 9WJ

Telephone: 0300 555 0333 (from 8.30am to 5.30pm)
By minicom on: 0300 555 1777
From overseas: +44 121 245 3050

E-mail: enquiries@legalombudsman.org.uk
Website: www.legalombudsman.org.uk

Note: If we entered into a contract for the provision of services with you online you may be entitled to use the EU Online Dispute Resolution (ODR) Platform at: <http://ec.europa.eu/odr> to assist in resolving matters. The Platform will direct you to various Alternative Dispute Resolution (ADR) specialists who are competent to deal with complaints about legal service [e.g. www.small-claims-mediation.co.uk] however we should point out that this firm does not ordinarily use such schemes and relies upon the services of the Legal Ombudsman to resolve such matters.