

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 contact you, normally by letter or email, acknowledging receipt of your complaint within seven days of receiving your communication.
- We will then investigate your complaint. This will normally involve passing your complaint to our client care manager, Graham Crouth, 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 Graham Crouth or if he is not available (e.g. because of annual leave etc) your complaint will be referred to another manager of the firm, Tim Barker, to deal with.
- We will endeavour to discuss the matter with you over the telephone in an attempt to resolve the complaint or alternatively we may invite you to a meeting to discuss your concerns in the hope that the matter can be resolved. We will do this within 14 days of sending you the acknowledgement letter.
- Within seven days of the meeting or telephone discussion, we 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, we will send you a detailed written reply to your complaint, including our proposals for resolving the matter. We will aim to do this within 21 days of sending you the acknowledgement letter.
- At this stage, if you are still not satisfied, please contact us again and we will arrange for another manager or someone unconnected with the matter at the firm 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 timeframe you may be entitled to 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

Alternative dispute resolution:

Alternative complaints bodies, such as ProMediate UK Ltd (www.promediate.co.uk) exist and are competent to deal with complaints about legal services should both you and this firm wish to use such a scheme. We do not usually agree to use such schemes as those operated by ProMediate UK Ltd as we believe the Legal Ombudsman is better equipped to resolve complaints against legal firms.

Note: If we entered into a contract for the provision of services with you online you may also 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.

Complaints to the Solicitors Regulation Authority (SRA)

Complaints about our professional conduct or behaviour:

Our regulatory body, the Solicitors Regulation Authority (SRA) can help you if you are concerned about our behaviour. This could be for concerns that you may have including dishonesty, taking or losing your money or treating you unfairly because of your age, a disability or other characteristic.

We are bound by various professional rules of conduct which can be viewed at www.sra.org.uk. You can also see more information about the help the SRA can give to you here:

<https://www.sra.org.uk/consumers/problems/reportsolicitor.page>

Contact Details for Solicitors Regulation Authority:

Address: The Cube, 199 Wharfside Street, Birmingham, B1 1RN
Telephone: 0370 606 2555
Email: report@sra.org.uk
Website: www.sra.org.uk