

## **Complaints Procedure**

We want to give you the best possible service. However, if at any point you become unhappy or concerned about our service we endeavour to ensure that you feel comfortable raising concerns about the service you have received.

You should inform us immediately so we can do our best to resolve them.

In the first instance, it may be helpful to contact the person who is working on your matter, to discuss your concerns, and we will do our best to resolve any issues at that stage. If you would like to make a formal complaint then you can read our full complaints procedure below.

Making a complaint will not affect how we handle your case and we aim to ensure complaints are managed effectively and reasonably.

We take client concerns very seriously and endeavour to ensure that clients feel comfortable raising concerns about the service they have received.

We aim to ensure complaints are managed effectively and reasonably.

### **Making a complaint**

You can register the complaint with the person dealing with your matter or the Client Care Partner, Harriet Weller ([harriet.weller@wsmsolicitors.com](mailto:harriet.weller@wsmsolicitors.com)). She is responsible for ensuring that complaints are handled effectively and in accordance with this procedure.

If the complaint is about the Client Care Partner, then you can register the complaint with our Compliance Officer for Legal Practice and Partner, Tim Sweetland ([tim.sweetland@wsmsolicitors.com](mailto:tim.sweetland@wsmsolicitors.com)).

### **Prospective Clients**

This procedure will also apply to prospective clients to whom we have refused to provide a service or persistently or unreasonably offered an unwanted service if you have evidence to show that we did not have reasonable grounds to do so.

### **Investigating the complaint**

- We will acknowledge the complaint within seven days.
- We will conduct a full investigation and an independent review of the matter.
- We aim to respond in full within 28 days. However, if the complaint is more complex we will require more time but we will let you know when you will receive a full response.
- We will reply to you, usually, in writing, informing you of our views on the complaint and how we propose to resolve it, hopefully to your satisfaction, including appropriate redress. This could include a reduction in fees if appropriate or compensation as a gesture of goodwill. You will also be advised in what timescale you will be given an initial/substantive response.
- If you are dissatisfied with the outcome or the way the complaint has been handled, you may write to the Client Care Partner who will make further investigations as necessary.
- The Client Care Partner will inform you of the conclusions and any alternative proposals to resolve the complaint, usually within 28 days of this being referred to them.
- If still unresolved at this stage, you may refer your complaint to the Legal Ombudsman. You will have to bring your complaint to the Legal Ombudsman within 6 months of receiving a final response about your complaint from us AND no later than one year from the date of the act or omission being complained about; or one year from the date on which you should have realised that there was cause for complaint. The Legal Ombudsman can choose to extend this time limit where it is fair and reasonable to do so.
- We will record and report centrally all complaints received from clients.
- We will identify the cause of any problems to which the client has complained offering appropriate redress and correcting any unsatisfactory procedures.

### **Legal Ombudsman**

The Legal Ombudsman is an independent body established by the Legal Services Act 2007 to deal with complaints against Solicitors.

The Legal Ombudsman may:

- Investigate the quality of professional service supplied by a solicitor to a client.
- Investigate allegations that a solicitor has breached rules of professional conduct.
- Investigate allegations that a solicitor has unreasonably refused to supply a professional service to a prospective client.
- Investigate allegations that a solicitor has persistently or unreasonably offered a professional service that the client does not want.

Before it will consider a complaint the Legal Ombudsman generally requires that the firm's internal Complaints Procedure has been exhausted. If the Legal Ombudsman is satisfied that the firm's proposals for resolving a complaint are reasonable, it may decline to investigate further.

The Legal Ombudsman's address is:

PO Box 6167, Slough, SL1 0EH; telephone, 0300 555 0333; website, [www.legalombudsman.org.uk](http://www.legalombudsman.org.uk); or email [enquiries@legalombudsman.org.uk](mailto:enquiries@legalombudsman.org.uk)

### **The Solicitors Regulation Authority**

The Solicitors Regulation Authority can help you if you are concerned about our behaviour. This could be for things like dishonesty, taking or losing your money or treating you unfairly because of your age, a disability or other characteristic.

You can raise your concerns with the Solicitors Regulation Authority, [www.sra.org.uk/consumers/problems/](http://www.sra.org.uk/consumers/problems/)