
COMPLAINTS PROCEDURE¹

We aim to deal with any complaints promptly, fairly, openly and effectively.*

We define a complaint as any written or verbal expression of dissatisfaction made by a client, approved supplier or other third party to any person in our organisation.

A complaint may be identified in a letter, telephone call, e-mail, fax or in the course of a face to face conversation.

A complaint may involve:

- Dissatisfaction with the handling of a case;
- Disappointment with an alleged lack of communication;
- Frustration with an alleged lack of case progress;
- An allegation of discrimination
- Dissatisfaction with the outcome of the case.

However, issues of a very minor nature, for example, not returning a non-urgent telephone call until the following day are not recorded as a complaint.

We inform clients in writing at the outset of their matter of their right to complain and how complaints can be made.*

We also inform clients in writing at the outset of their matter of their right to complain to the Legal Ombudsman, the time frame for doing so and full details of how to contact the Legal Ombudsman.^{2*}

When a client, approved supplier or other third party makes a complaint, we send them our standard letter which sets out the Law Centre's complaints handling procedure, outlining the relevant stages and timescales. A copy of this letter is attached as an appendix to the manual.³

We report and record every complaint made centrally. All complaints are referred to the Complaints Officer, Derek Bernardi, Supervising Solicitor, in the first instance, who:

- Reviews the matter with any staff involved;
- Identifies the cause of any problems of which the client, approved supplier or third party has complained
- Determines what degree of validity the complaint has;

¹ Lexcel 6.5

² SRA Code of conduct 2011 O1.10

³ A sample complaints handling letter is available as part of this toolkit

- Decides how the complaint should be resolved.

The Complaints Officer will offer the client, approved supplier or other third party appropriate redress and recommend amendments to unsatisfactory procedures to the Director where appropriate. The Director will ensure that any unsatisfactory procedures are corrected.

Any complaints made where the Complaints Officer had conduct of the matter are referred to the Director.

The Complaints Officer keeps details of all complaints received in a central record. Copies of any documents/correspondence showing how each complaint is resolved are also retained on the central record.

The Director has overall responsibility for handling complaints and carries out an analysis of the central record of complaints annually. Following this review s/he decides whether any action can be taken to improve the Law Centre's services. The results of the review (i.e. any trends identified and action proposed) are documented.

If the complaint cannot be satisfactorily dealt with by the above procedure, the complaint will be referred to the Board of Directors for resolution.

If you are unhappy with their findings then you can complain to the Legal Ombudsman. In order to investigate your complaint they must be satisfied that it meets all of the following requirements:

1. Your problem or when you found out about it happened after 5 October 2010;
2. You are referring your complaint to the Legal Ombudsman within either six years of the problem happening or three years from when you found out about it.
3. You are referring your complaint to us within six months of our final response to your complaint.

Their contact details are as follows:

Legal Ombudsman
PO Box 6806
Wolverhampton WV1 9WJ
Tel: 0300 555 0333
Email: enquiries@legalombudsman.org.uk
Website: www.legalombudsman.org.uk