

COMPLAINTS PROCEDURE

1. Our aim is to give you a good service at all times. However if you have a complaint you are invited to let us know as soon as possible. It is not necessary to involve solicitors in order to make your complaint but you are free to do so should you wish.
2. Chambers will not usually deal with complaints that fall outside of the Legal Ombudsman's time limits. Further detail about the time limits is set out below.
3. The Ombudsman will also only deal with complaints from consumers. This means that only complaints from the barrister's client are within their jurisdiction. Non-clients who are not satisfied with the outcome of the Chambers' investigation should contact the Bar Standards Board rather than the Legal Ombudsman.
4. It should be noted that it may not always be possible to investigate a complaint brought by a non-client. This is because the ability of Chambers to satisfactorily investigate and resolve such matters is limited and complaints of this nature are often better suited to the disciplinary processes maintained by the Bar Standards Board. Therefore, Chambers will make an initial assessment of the complaint and if they feel that the issues raised cannot be satisfactorily resolved through the Chambers complaints process they will refer you to the Bar Standards Board.

Complaints made by telephone

5. You may wish to make a complaint in writing and, if so, please follow the procedure in paragraph 7 below. However, if you would rather speak on the telephone about your complaint then please telephone the individual nominated under the Chambers Complaints Procedure to deal with complaints, the Head of Chambers Michael Collard or (if the complaint is about a member of staff) the Chambers Director, Clare Kelly. If the complaint is about the Chambers Director please telephone the Head of Chambers. You can reach the Head of Chambers or the Chambers Director on 020 7353 2532. The person you contact will make a note of the details of your complaint and what you would like done about it. They will discuss your concerns with you and aim to resolve them. If the matter is resolved they will record the outcome, check that you are satisfied with the outcome and record that you are satisfied. You may also wish to record the outcome of the telephone discussion in writing.
6. If your complaint is not resolved on the telephone you will be invited to write to us about it so it can be investigated formally.

Complaints made in writing

7. Please give the following details:

Your name and address;
Which member(s) of Chambers you are complaining about;
The detail of the complaint; and
What you would like done about it.

Please address your letter to The Head of Chambers, 5 Pump Court, Temple, London EC4Y 7AP. We will, where possible, acknowledge receipt of your complaint within two days and provide you with details of how your complaint will be dealt with.

8. Our Chambers has a panel headed by the Head of Chambers and made up of experienced members of Chambers and the Chambers Director, which considers any written complaint. Within 14 days of your letter being received the head of the panel or their deputy will appoint a member of the panel to investigate it. If your complaint is against the head of the panel, the next most senior member of the panel will investigate it. In any case, the person appointed will be someone other than the person you are complaining about.
9. The person appointed to investigate will write to you as soon as possible to let you know they have been appointed and that they will reply to your complaint within 14 days. If they find later that they are not going to be able to reply within 14 days they will set a new date for their reply and inform you. Their reply will set out:
 - The nature and scope of the investigation;
 - The conclusion on each complaint and the basis for that conclusion; and
 - If the investigator finds that you are justified in your complaint, their proposals for resolving the complaint.

Confidentiality

10. All conversations and documents relating to the complaint will be treated as confidential and will be disclosed only to the extent that is necessary. Disclosure will be to the Head of Chambers, members of our Management Committee and to anyone involved in the complaint and its investigation. Such people will include the barrister member or staff who you have complained about, the head or relevant senior member of the panel and the person who investigates the complaint. The Bar Standards Board is entitled to inspect the documents and seek information about the complaint when discharging its auditing and monitoring functions.

Our Policy

11. As part of our commitment to client care we make a written record of any complaint and retain all documents and correspondence generated by the complaint for a period of six years. Our Management Committee inspects an anonymised record regularly with a view to improving services.

Complaints to the Legal Ombudsman

12. If you are unhappy with the outcome of our investigation and you fall within their jurisdiction you may take up your complaint with the Legal Ombudsman, the independent complaints body for complaints about lawyers, at the conclusion of our consideration of your complaint. The Ombudsman is not able to consider your complaint until it has first been investigated by Chambers.

Please note that the Legal Ombudsman has a time limit of six years from the date of the problem happening; or three years from when you found out about it. You must refer your complaint to the Legal Ombudsman within six months of our final response.

You can write to the Ombudsman at:
Legal Ombudsman
PO Box 6806
Wolverhampton
WV1 9WJ

Telephone number: 0300 555 0333

Email: enquiries@legalombudsman.org.uk

13. If you are unhappy with the outcome of the investigation, alternative complaints bodies such as ProMediate (www.promediate.co.uk) also exist which are competent to deal with complaints about legal services, should you and the barrister both wish to use such a scheme. If you wish to use ProMediate please contact us to discuss this. Please also note that: (1) the time limit for contacting ProMediate is presently 1 year, and (2) if mediation is used, neither you nor the barrister is required to accept the proposed resolution. If mediation does not resolve the complaint, you may still make a complaint to the Legal Ombudsman (provided you fall within their jurisdiction and you do so within the time limit).

14. If you are not the barrister's client and are unhappy with the outcome of our investigation then please contact the Bar Standards Board at:
Bar Standards Board
Professional Conduct Department
289-293 High Holborn
London
WC1V 7JZ
Telephone number: 020 7611 1444
Website: www.barstandardsboard.org.uk