

COMPLAINTS HANDLING PROCEDURE

1. Introduction

- 1.1 Providing our clients with a good service is important to us. Continuously improving the service we offer, including by learning from our mistakes, is always our aim.
- 1.2 If despite our best efforts something goes wrong and you are dissatisfied with any aspect of the advice or service we provided or any fees we billed, we invite clients to tell us so that we may try to resolve the matter fairly, effectively and as promptly as circumstances allow.
- 1.3 Clients may use the procedure described below to raise a concern about the advice or service we provided or an issue relating to our fees or an invoice we delivered.

2. Overview

- 2.1 Our internal complaints handling process has two tiers which afford options for escalation should that become necessary. Most complaints are resolved at the first stage.

Stage 1: Supervising Solicitor

The Supervising Solicitor will be able to resolve most issues quickly. Please contact them in the first instance. Their name and contact details appear in the client care letter (i.e., engagement letter) and/or in the other letters/emails you received from us.

Stage 2: Complaints Officer

If the supervising solicitor is unable to resolve the matter, please contact our designated Complaints Handling Officer (Mr. Parvez Khan). He is responsible for the firm's complaints handling process and for reviewing any complaints which cannot be resolved within the supervising solicitor. He will review the complaints handling procedure which the supervising solicitor followed and their decision and provide a final written response on behalf of the firm.

3. Procedure

- 3.1 Concerns should be raised with the relevant supervising solicitor in the first instance. They will acknowledge the complaint, investigate your concerns, and provide a written response. They will be able to resolve most matters quickly and effectively.
- 3.2 If the supervising solicitor is unable to resolve a particular issue however, you may escalate the matter to the Compliant Handling Officer (CHO) in our firm. CHO will acknowledge the complaint. They may also ask you to explain any aspect of the complaint that is unclear or invite you to suggest an appropriate remedy if you have not done so.
- 3.3 The CHO will investigate the complaint in whatever manner they consider is necessary and appropriate having regard to the issues raised. Normally this will involve speaking to the supervising solicitor and the responsible fee earners and examining the file or the relevant part of it. When their investigation is complete, they

will write to you setting out their view of the matter and suggesting any redress they feel is appropriate. If they consider that a meeting might help to explain or resolve a complaint, they may write to you suggesting a meeting. If you would prefer not to attend a meeting, they will write to you instead.

3.4 The CHO will write to you setting out the firm's final position with regard to the complaint. In his final response letter he will tell you about the Legal Ombudsman Scheme and how and within what time period you should contact the Legal Ombudsman should you wish to pursue the matter further.

3.5 The Legal Ombudsman Scheme gives us 8 weeks in which to issue a final written response to a complaint. How we handle a complaint and the length of time it takes us to investigate it and respond to it will depend upon a number of factors, some of which might be outside our control. They include: the size and complexity of the matter; the nature and circumstances of the complaint; the quantity of documentation to be reviewed; the time which has elapsed since the matter complained about occurred; whether an archived file needs to be retrieved from storage off-site; and the availability of the partner and fee earners who have or had conduct of the matter. Subject to those factors, we will try to complete all three stages of our complaints handling process within that 8-week period. If exceptionally and because of circumstances outside our control more time is needed, however, we will tell you and indicate how long we believe we might need to investigate and respond to your concerns properly.

4. Legal Ombudsman

4.1 If we are unable to resolve your complaint then you can have the complaint independently looked at by the Legal Ombudsman. The Legal Ombudsman investigates complaints about service issues with lawyers. This would be where we have exhausted our own internal complaints handling procedure as described above you are still not satisfied with our final written response to your

complaint, or with the manner in which we handled the complaint.

4.2 Information about who may submit a complaint to the Legal Ombudsman, the types of complaint which fall within his remit, the timescales within which a complaint must be submitted to him, and the procedures he will use if he accepts a complaint which is submitted to him is published on his website (www.legalombudsman.org.uk). The Legal Ombudsman scheme applies where clients are an individual, a business with fewer than 10 employees and turnover or assets not exceeding a certain threshold, a charity or trust with a net income of less than £1m, or if you fall within certain other categories.

4.3 The Legal Ombudsman expects complaints to be made to them within one year of the date of the act or omission about which you are concerned or within one year of you realising there was a concern. You must also refer your concerns to the Legal Ombudsman within six months of our final response to you.

4.4 The Legal Ombudsman has however a degree of discretion about the complaints they accept and as to when and how they must be notified to them. Normally he will expect a client to (1) exhaust the firm's internal complaints handling procedure before submitting a complaint to him, provided the firm provides a substantive response within 8 weeks of receiving the complaint; and (2) submit the complaint to him within 6 months of the client receiving a final written response from the firm about the complaint.

4.5 The Legal Ombudsman can be contacted by post (Legal Ombudsman, PO Box 6806, Wolverhampton WV1 9WJ), email (enquiries@legalombudsman.org.uk) or telephone (0300 555 0333). Website: www.legalombudsman.org.uk

5. SRA and Alternatives

5.1 If you are unhappy with our behaviour, you can contact the Solicitors Regulation Authority (SRA) who can help if you are

concerned about our behaviour. This could be for things like dishonesty, taking or losing your money or treating you unfairly. More information is available on the SRA website here: <https://www.sra.org.uk/consumers/problems/>

5.2 Alternative dispute resolution (ADR) bodies exist which are competent to deal with complaints about legal services should both you and our firm wish to use such a scheme. We have, however, chosen not to adopt an ADR process. If, therefore, you wish to complain further, you should contact the Legal Ombudsman or SRA.

6. Costs

6.1 We will not charge you for handling your complaint.

6.2 Please note that if we have issued a bill for work done on the matter, and all or some of the bill is not paid, we may be entitled to charge interest on the amount outstanding. This is explained in our Terms of Business.

6.3 The Legal Ombudsman service is free of charge.

6.4 Any ADR entity may charge for its service. The ADR entity is responsible for informing all parties of the cost of its dispute resolution procedure.