

Chambers Solicitors

CLIENT COMPLAINTS POLICY

1. Introduction

Chambers is committed to providing a high quality legal service to all our clients. When something goes wrong, and a complaint is made by a client, it needs to be dealt with promptly, fairly, openly and effectively. This will help us to improve our standards.

Our definition of a complaint is:

“any written or verbal expression of dissatisfaction referred to any person in our organisation by a client, approved supplier or other third party to any person in our organisation”

A complaint may involve:

- Dissatisfaction with the handling of a case,
- Disappointment with lack of communication to the client,
- Frustration with the perceived lack of progress of the case,
- Displeasure with the outcome of the case.

It is important to be aware of complaints that a client escalates, as well as clients that may escalate a complaint. Issues of a minor nature, for example, a client expressing displeasure at not receiving a call back until the next day will not usually be considered as a complaint, unless the client states that this is a pattern.

We inform clients in writing at the outset of their matter (within our client care letter) of their right to complain and how complaints can be made. We also inform clients in writing, both at the outset of their matter and at the conclusion 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. Our complaints procedure

We report and record these complaints. The Complaints Partner is SU and the complaint is passed to him in the first instance.

He will then review the matter with the staff member involved, identify the cause of the complaint, determine the validity of the complaint and decide how the complaint should be remedied.

Where SU identifies a potential negligence claim or where a client, approved supplier or other third party claims financial loss, compensation or threatens legal action, SU will decide in conjunction with our insurers whether we should continue with this complaints procedure or adopt some other course of action.

We inform clients if we discover any act or omission which could give rise to a claim by them against us but before doing so fee earners must refer any such cases to their supervisors for advice. If the supervisor agrees that the circumstances of the case could give rise to a claim then the case must be referred

immediately to SU who will decide, in conjunction with our insurers, what information should be provided to the client.

SU will offer the client, approved supplier or other third party appropriate redress and recommend amendments to unsatisfactory procedures to the staff member where appropriate. SU will ensure that any unsatisfactory procedures are corrected.

Any complaints made where SU had conduct of the matter are referred to LS.

A step by step process is set out below:-

1. Upon receipt of the complaint, SU will take a copy for the complaints records and organise a meeting with the staff member in question;
2. Acknowledgement of the complaint is sent to the client;
3. SU will then investigate the complaint, reviewing the file and speaking to the staff member about the transaction;
4. SU will consider whether a formal meeting is required with the client, in order to resolve the complaint. This is dependent on the nature of the complaint and on the client;
5. Within 21 days of the date of the acknowledgement letter, SU will write to the client to confirm what took place and any solutions he has agreed with the staff member;
6. At this stage, we ask that the client contact us again to explain why you remain unhappy with our response and we will review their comments. Depending on the matter we may at this stage arrange for another partner to review the decision;
7. We hope by this point the solutions/redress offered by SU are sufficient to satisfy the complaint, however if the client is still not happy we would invite the client to contact the Legal Ombudsman at PO Box 6806, Wolverhampton WV1 9WJ or call 0300 555 0333 about the complaint. The details are given the client in the client care letter. Any complaint to the Legal Ombudsman must usually be made within six months of receiving a final written response from us regarding your complaint. The Legal Ombudsman has provided further guidance on its service at www.legalombudsman.org.uk.

SU has overall responsibility for handling complaints and carries out an analysis of the central record of complaints annually. Following this review he decides whether any action can be taken to improve our services.

Alternative complaints bodies exist which are competent to deal with complaints about legal services should Chambers be required to use such a scheme. Online Dispute Resolution is available to consumers to resolve disputes in an alternative way. A link for more information is here <http://ec.europa.eu/consumers/odr/>.

A copy of this complaints procedure can be provided to clients upon request.

3. Review

Chambers has the above measures in place to ensure we achieve our goal of providing a quality service. This policy will be reviewed annually by SSU.