

COMPLAINTS PROCEDURE



OUR MISSION

1. Our aim is to give all lay and professional clients a good service at all times. However, in the event that you are dissatisfied with the treatment you have received from a barrister or a member of our staff, we wish to provide a remedy.

WHEN SHOULD YOU COMPLAIN?

2. Experience tells us that, very often, potential complaints can be resolved informally, because they may have arisen through a misunderstanding or can be remedied without resort to the full complaints procedure. We encourage you to take up a complaint with the responsible person in the first instance, if possible by telephone. If the matter cannot be resolved to your satisfaction in this way, it is open to you to make a formal complaint. We recognise, of course, that there may be grievances which are incapable, in your view, of being resolved in this informal way.

3. A formal complaint will be entertained if it is made within 6 months of the date of the cause of the complaint or when informal resolution has failed, whichever is the later.

WHAT IS A COMPLAINT?

4. Under this procedure a complaint is one made in writing, including by email to info@gclaw.co.uk, which is addressed to the Head of Chambers. You should supply your name and address, identify which member(s) of Chambers you are complaining about, provide the detail of the complaint and indicate what you would like done about it.

5. If you consider yourself to have a disability which affects your ability to formulate or pursue a complaint, please tell us and we will discuss appropriate and reasonable adjustments with you.

6. Your correspondence will be acknowledged in writing by the Head of Chambers within three working days of receipt.

7. It is the job of the Head of Chambers to determine what has gone wrong. You should receive a full written response within 14 days.

8. However, if the matter raises issues which, in the opinion of the Head of Chambers, requires an investigator to determine the facts, he will appoint a suitable member of chambers to carry out an investigation. A letter will be sent to you within 14 days of your complaint informing you who has been appointed.

9. The investigator will then have access to all the relevant documents, will be able to interview witnesses and may need to contact you for further information.

10. The investigator will then produce a report to the Head of Chambers as soon as possible, ordinarily within 14 days of his or her appointment. If it is not possible to meet this deadline the Head of Chambers will write to you and inform you when the investigation is expected to be concluded.

11. The Head of Chambers will consider the report and write to you, setting out the nature of the investigation. He will inform you whether he upholds the complaint or rejects it, setting out the reasons why. When a complaint is upheld the letter will set out or include a proposal for resolving the complaint.

CONFIDENTIALITY

12. All conversations, records and documents relating to the complaint will be treated confidentially and retained for 6 years. They will only be disclosed as necessary: normally only to the person complained about, the investigator and (in response to a specific request) the Bar Standards Board or Legal Ombudsman.

SUPERVISION OF COMPLAINTS PROCEDURE

13. As part of our commitment to client care, we keep a record of all complaints made and the outcomes. Our complaints panel may inspect this record regularly to ensure compliance with our procedure and with a view to improving the service we provide. Our complaints panel also submit an annual report to Chambers' Management Committee to ensure the continued improvement of our services. Additionally the record of complaints is available to the Bar Standards Board in the exercise of its monitoring or auditing functions.

COMPLAINTS TO THE LEGAL OMBUDSMAN

14. If you are dissatisfied with the outcome of our handling of your complaint you may pursue your complaint with the Legal Ombudsman. The Ombudsman is not able to consider your complaint until it has firstly been made to Chambers under the above procedure. Please note that the Legal Ombudsman has a twelve-month time limit from the date of the act or omission about which you are complaining. The Legal Ombudsman can be contacted on 0300 555 0333 or if calling from overseas on +44 121 245 3050. Alternatively you can write to:

Legal Ombudsman
PO Box 15870
Birmingham
B30 9EB

Or email enquiries@legalombudsman.org.uk

Please see www.legalombudsman.org.uk for further information.

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