

COMPLAINTS PROCEDURE

Policy

We are committed to providing a high-quality legal service to all our Clients. If something has gone wrong, then we need you to tell us about it. This helps us maintain and improve our standards.

Procedure

If you have a complaint or concern about the quality of service, it should first be raised with the fee earner dealing with your file. Most minor issues can be sorted out quickly and to everyone's satisfaction in this manner.

If that has not resolved the problem or you consider it is more than a minor issue, then you should raise your complaint with the relevant Head of Department. Their name will have been provided to you in the Terms of Business Letter sent to you when you first instructed us on the piece of work.

If your complaint is about that individual or you don't think they can resolve it, then you should contact our Client Complaints Handling Partner, Mr Trevor Japal. His details are as follows:

Trevor Japal – Complaints Handling Partner
Lex Sterling Solicitors
14 Russell Hill Road
Purley
Surrey
CR8 2LA

Tel: 0208 668 8175
Email: tjapal@lexsterling.com

If the complaint is about a fee earner and you have not considered approaching the Head of Department, he will pass the complaint to the Head of Department and ask them to investigate it in the first instance.

What Happens Next

Within 5 working days of the Head of Department or Complaints Handling Partner receiving a formal complaint from you, you will receive a letter acknowledging your complaint and asking you to set it out in as much detail as you can. Your response can be by letter or email and in more simple cases, by phone. However, you will appreciate that there is less chance of a misunderstanding if you explain your concerns in writing.

Your complaint will be registered on our Central Complaints Register.

Once we have your detailed information, we can start the investigation. This can involve all or any of the following steps.

- Asking the fee earner or member of staff complained about to provide their comments.
- Reading the file in order to see exactly what has and has not occurred.
- Asking another fee earner who deals with that sort of work to review the file and report back with their views.

Within 21 working days of the start of the investigation we will either write to you with a Report of the outcome of our investigation and suggestions for resolving the matter or write explaining what additional information is needed either from you or a third party to enable the investigation to be completed.

If you are not happy with the Report and / or suggested solutions, then you can select any of the Options set out below:

OPTIONS

An Informal Meeting

You can ask for an informal meeting with the Head of Department / Complaints Handling Partner who has produced the Report. The

Meeting will however, take place in normal office hours and normally at the office the individual is based.

If you request the meeting, then within 5 working days of it taking place, we will write to you to confirm what took place and any solutions we may have agreed with you.

The Review

The Review can happen in a number of ways.

1. The Head of Department (or Complaints Handling Partner if they have prepared the Report) will review their own decision and notify you of our final position within a further 7 working days
2. We may ask another Partner not previously involved in the complaint to review the decision. You will be provided with their final review decision within a further 14 working days.

Referral to the Legal Ombudsman

Even if you decide not to opt for the Informal Meeting and / or the Review, or you have elected one of those but we have still not managed to resolve the issues satisfactorily – you are still entitled to raise the issues with the Legal Ombudsman who can be contacted at Legal Ombudsman, PO Box 6167, Slough SL1 0EH. Tel 0300 555 0333 or go to www.legalombudsman.org.uk

Complaints referred to the Legal Ombudsman must be made within 6 months of your last contact with us. The Legal Ombudsman will normally require you to have utilised our internal complaints process to the end of the Report stage before it will accept a referral.

Your Data Security

Throughout the process of your complaint, personal and sensitive data is required to ensure that all of our information is correct so we can handle your complaint in a timely and lawful manner. Any documentation, requests, evidence and associated notes or telephone recordings will be stored on the matter file to which access is restricted. This information will be kept in line with the firm's retention policy and subsequently deleted after this time. If you raise a complaint with the Legal Ombudsman, we will be

required to provide them with supporting documentation from your matter so that we can, in turn, comply with our legal obligations to them.