



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. Please note that the Legal Ombudsman, the independent complaints body for service complaints about lawyers, has a six-year time limit in which a complaint must be raised from the date of the act or omission complained of from when the complainant should reasonably have known there was cause for complaint without taking advice from a third party. The Ombudsman can extend the time limit in exceptional circumstances. Chambers must therefore have regard to that time-frame when deciding whether they are able to investigate your complaint. So as to assist in our ability to investigate any complaint, we ask that complaints be made within 12 months of the incident from which the complaint arises. This is necessary because barristers do not always retain the papers on a case, returning them to the instructing solicitor on completion of the case. Investigating complaints without the relevant files can be a difficult process. If a complaint is being made outside of this timescale complainants are asked to explain why there has been such delay. Chambers retains the right to refuse complaints that are more than 12 months old without any explanation for that delay.

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 – Martin Leech, Director of Clerking or Steven Tobias, Deputy Director of Clerking, on 0161 833 6000. If the complaint is about one of the above named, telephone Marc Willems QC, the Head of Chambers, on 0161 833 6000. The person you contact will make a note of the details of your complaint and what you would like done about it. He will discuss your concerns with you and aim to resolve them. If the matter is resolved he 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:

Martin Leech, Cobden House Chambers, 19 Quay Street, Manchester, M3 3HN. 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 Michael Jones and made up of experienced members of Chambers and a senior member of staff, which considers any written complaint. Within 14 days of your letter being received the head of the panel or his deputy (Martin Callery) in his absence 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 he has been appointed and that he will reply to your complaint within 14 days. If he finds later that he is not going to be able to reply within 14 days he will set a new date for his reply and inform you. His reply will set out:

- The nature and scope of his investigation;
- His conclusion on each complaint and the basis for his conclusion; and
- If he finds that you are justified in your complaint, his 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 twelve-month time limit from the date of the act or omission about which you are complaining within which to make your complaint. You can write to them at:

Legal Ombudsman
PO Box 6806,
Wolverhampton
WV1 9WJ
Telephone number: 0300 555 0333
Email: enquiries@legalombudsman.org.uk

13. 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: 0207 6111 444
Website : www.barstandardsboard.org.uk