

Client Complaints Procedure

To help us understand your complaint and so that we do not miss anything, you will be asked to confirm your full name and contact details, and what you think we have got wrong, plus your case reference number if you know it, together with any other information you think might be relevant.

How to make a complaint and who you should contact

If you have a complaint, contact us with the details. Ideally, we would prefer this to be in writing; by email is fine. If you cannot do this, you can contact us by phone to discuss your complaint, or make an appointment to see someone

If possible please contact the person who has been dealing with your case. They will try and address your concerns and agree a solution with you and the best way forward. If after doing this you are still not happy, (or if you would rather not contact the person dealing with your case about your concerns or complaint), please contact our Complaints Co-ordinator; contact details are on our website plus at the end of this document.

What will happen next

1. Within 5 working days of getting your complaint we will send you an acknowledgement letter, possibly asking you to confirm or give more detail. You will get a copy of our Complaints Procedure at the time we acknowledge your complaint.
2. The acknowledgement letter we send to you will provide information about how your complaint will be resolved including;
 - a. The name and contact details of the Complaints Co-ordinator who will be dealing with your complaint.
 - b. The process the Complaints Co-ordinator will follow to investigate your complaint, which will include, as appropriate, one or more of the following options: -
 - (i) A request for you to provide written confirmation of the circumstances of your complaint (particularly if your complaint was not received in writing initially).
 - (ii) An invitation to a meeting to discuss your complaint – you may refuse this invitation but it may be helpful in establishing facts and finding an acceptable resolution for you.
 - (iii) A meeting with the caseworker concerned to discuss your complaint.
 - (iv) Inspection of the file of papers/electronic record relating to your case.
 - (v) A timetable of events leading to the resolution of your complaint.
3. The Complaints Co-ordinator will log any complaint received, and together with the Second Senior Solicitor if necessary, will investigate the complaint by discussing the situation with the caseworker involved and their supervisor, looking at the case notes, whether electronic, paper or both; the Complaints Co-ordinator will then respond to the person making the complaint within 21 working days of the complaint acknowledgement letter. If the complaint is against the Second Senior Solicitor, the Senior Solicitor will

become involved. If the complaint is against the Complaints Co-ordinator, the Second Senior Solicitor will be the first point of contact.

4. There may be circumstances where it is not possible to respond fully to you within 21 working days. If so, we will give you a reason for this together with a revised time frame for our response.

5. If at any point during this process you are not happy with how your complaint is being handled, or the time frame we have set out for you, please contact us immediately.

6. When we have agreed the resolution to your complaint we will offer you a meeting to discuss our findings, or confirm them in writing, whatever you prefer, and then carry out the agreed actions within the agreed timeframe.

7. All matters connected with your complaint will be recorded centrally for future review to ensure that it has been handled effectively and efficiently.

What if you are still not satisfied

We will try very hard to deal with any complaints or dissatisfaction about our service. If you remain unhappy after we have tried to resolve your complaint you can ask us to review our decision. We would generally aim to carry out a review within 14 days and let you know the result within 7 days of the end of the review. At this time, we will write to you confirming our final position on your complaint and explaining our reasons. You are also entitled at this point to have a meeting with the Second Senior Solicitor and the Chair of our Management Committee.

Referrals to the Legal Ombudsman

Although we hope this will not be necessary, if you make a complaint and we are unable to resolve it to your satisfaction, or if we have not been able to resolve your concerns within an 8 week period, you can refer the matter to the Legal Ombudsman Service which is an independent body that investigates problems with poor service from solicitors and law firms. They do not charge for this. You will need to provide;

1. Reasons why you are dissatisfied with our handling of your complaint and/or the decision reached.
2. The name of the caseworker against whom you are complaining and/or the name of our firm, Derbyshire Law Centre.
3. A copy of our final decision letter.

The Legal Ombudsman can be contacted in the following ways;

- In writing to the Legal Ombudsman, PO Box 6806, Wolverhampton, WV1 9WJ
- By telephone on 0300 555 0333
- By email enquiries@legalombudsman.org.uk
- Via its website at www.legalombudsman.org.uk/helping-the-public

Time limits

Normally you must bring a complaint to the Legal Ombudsman Service within six months of receiving our final decision letter, or within one year of the act or omission about which you are complaining occurring (or within one year from when you should reasonably have become aware of it). The Legal Ombudsman Service does have discretion to extend that one-year period if on the evidence it is fair and reasonable to do so.

Debt/Immigration Clients

As well as using the Legal Ombudsman Service, clients receiving debt advice can also have a complaint independently looked at by the Financial Ombudsman Service. The procedure is the same as for using the Legal Ombudsman Service, in that you should use our internal complaints procedure first, and if we cannot resolve your complaint, or the matter is not resolved within 8 weeks, you can have the complaint independently looked. The Financial Ombudsman Service is a free and easy to use service that settles complaints between consumers and businesses that provide debt advice. For further information you can contact the Financial Ombudsman Service on 0800 023 4567, or via their website which is www.financial-ombudsman.org.uk. Their postal address is the Financial Ombudsman Service, Exchange Tower, London, E14 9SR or you can email them at complaint.info@financial-ombudsman.org.uk. Normally you need to bring a complaint to the Financial Ombudsman Service within 6 months of receiving a final written response from us about your complaint, or within 3 years of when you should reasonably have been aware of it.

Clients receiving immigration advice can have a complaint independently looked at by the Office of the Immigration Services Commissioner (OISC). Their contact details are: The Office of the Immigration Services Commissioner, PO Box 567, Dartford, Kent DA1 9XW, telephone number 0345 0000046, email address: info@oisc.gov.uk.

The OISC is the public body that regulates immigration advice and services within the UK. The OISC may review your file as part of their regulatory role.

Contact Details

Complaints Co-ordinator: Nikki Tugby 01246 550674, or nikki.tugby@derbyshirelawcentre.org.uk

Senior Solicitor: Lisa Haythorne: 01246 550674 lisa.haythorne@derbyshirelawcentre.org.uk

Second Senior Solicitor: Sue Allard 01246 550674 sue.allard@derbyshirelawcentre.org.uk