

Complaints procedure

1. Our Commitment to You

Our aim is to provide a high-quality service at all times. However, if you have a complaint, you are invited to let us know as soon as possible so that we can address your concerns. It is not necessary to instruct solicitors in order to make your complaint, although you are free to do so if you wish. We aim to resolve concerns promptly and, where possible, informally.

Please contact us if you require this procedure in an alternative format or assistance in making your complaint.

2. Scope of This Procedure

This procedure applies to complaints about the service provided by Chambers, including the service provided by barristers and members of staff. This includes, for example:

- delay in dealing with your matter;
- failure to communicate;
- administrative errors;
- disputes about fees (as long as the basis of the dispute is not one of the matters listed below)

This procedure does not apply to:

- complaints about alleged negligence in the performance of the barrister's services;
- dissatisfaction about the outcome of a case;
- matters of conduct which are not related to the provision of the barrister's services.

Barristers are independent practitioners and are individually responsible for their legal work and professional conduct.

Where a complaint raises both service issues and allegations of professional misconduct or negligence, Chambers will investigate the service elements but not the allegations of professional misconduct or negligence.

3. Time Limits and the Legal Ombudsman

The Legal Ombudsman is the independent body for complaints about the service provided by lawyers. The Ombudsman has time limits within which a complaint must be raised:

- You must refer your complaint to the Legal Ombudsman within one year of the act or omission complained about, or within one year of when you should reasonably have known there was a cause for complaint; and
- Within six months of receiving Chambers' final response.

The Legal Ombudsman may extend these time limits in exceptional circumstances. Chambers will have regard to these timeframes when determining whether we are able to investigate a complaint and will not usually deal with complaints falling outside them.

4. Who Can Complain

The Legal Ombudsman will generally only deal with complaints from clients (consumers).

If you are not the barrister's client, or if your complaint concerns professional conduct rather than service, you may wish to contact the Bar Standards Board (BSB).

Chambers will make an initial assessment of each complaint. Where a complaint cannot be satisfactorily addressed through this procedure—for example, because it concerns professional conduct—we will inform you and direct you to the appropriate body.

5. Complaints Made by Telephone

You may choose to make your complaint in writing (see below). However, if you would prefer to discuss your complaint by telephone, please contact:

Walter Womersley
Chief Executive Officer

If your complaint concerns the Chief Executive Officer, please contact:

Andrew Butler KC
Head of Chambers

The person you contact will:

- make a note of the details of your complaint;
- discuss your concerns with you; and

- where possible, seek to resolve the matter informally.

If the matter is resolved, a record will be kept and you will be asked to confirm that you are satisfied with the outcome.

6. If your complaint is not resolved on the telephone, you will be invited to submit it in writing so that it can be formally investigated.

7. Complaints Made in Writing

Summary of Key Timeframes for Written Complaints

- Acknowledgement of complaint: 2 business days
- Appointment of investigator: 7 business days
- Written response: 25 business days

Full details of the process are set out below.

Each member of Chambers is self-employed and responsible for their own work. However, Chambers is responsible for handling complaints about service and ensuring they are dealt with fairly.

Complaints are overseen by the Heads of Chambers, who will appoint an appropriate individual to act as the complaint handler. The appointed person will be independent of the matter complained of.

8. Please include the following details in your written complaint:
 - Your name and address;
 - The name of the barrister(s) or staff member(s) you are complaining about;
 - The details of your complaint; and
 - What you would like done to resolve the matter.

9. Please address your complaint to:

Walter Womersley
Chief Executive Officer

We will acknowledge receipt of your complaint within 2 business days and confirm how it will be handled.

10. Chambers has a complaints panel chaired by Andrew Butler KC and comprising experienced members of Chambers and a senior member of staff.

Within 7 business days of receipt:

- a. the Chair (or deputy) will appoint a panel member to investigate the complaint.
- b. the investigator will not be the person complained about and will be independent of the matter.

If the complaint concerns the Chair, another senior member of the panel will be appointed.

11. The appointed investigator will write to you within 25 business days of receipt of the complaint.

If this timeframe cannot be met, you will be notified promptly and given a revised date.

The written response will include:

- the name and experience of the investigator;
- the scope of the investigation;
- findings on each aspect of the complaint and the reasons for those findings;
- any proposals for resolving the complaint, where it is upheld; and
- details of your right to take the complaint to the Legal Ombudsman if you remain dissatisfied.

This constitutes Chambers' final response.

Any proposals made are not binding but are intended to assist in achieving a fair resolution.

12. Confidentiality

All complaints will be handled confidentially. Information will be disclosed only where necessary to investigate and determine the complaint.

This may include:

- the person complained about;
- members of Chambers involved in the process;
- relevant management personnel.

The Bar Standards Board may also inspect documents as part of its regulatory functions.

13. Records and Monitoring

Chambers maintains a record of complaints and retains all related documents for six years.

We will record details of each complaint, including key dates, the nature of the complaint, how it was handled, the outcome, and whether the complainant was satisfied. This information may be used in anonymised form for regulatory reporting to the Bar Standards Board.

These records are used to monitor trends, ensure regulatory compliance and to improve the quality of our service.

14. Complaints to the Legal Ombudsman

If you are unhappy with the outcome of our investigation and you fall within the Legal Ombudsman's jurisdiction, you may refer your complaint to them.

The Legal Ombudsman will not usually consider your complaint until Chambers has completed its investigation.

Contact details:

Legal Ombudsman
PO Box 6167
Slough SL1 0EH
Telephone: 0300 555 0333
Email: enquiries@legalombudsman.org.uk

15. Alternative Dispute Resolution

Alternative dispute resolution providers (such as ProMediate) may also be available if both you and the barrister agree to use them.

Please note:

- Any relevant time limits for such schemes may apply;
- Participation is voluntary; and
- You are not required to accept any proposed resolution.

If mediation does not resolve the complaint, you may still refer the matter to the Legal Ombudsman (subject to their jurisdiction and time limits).

16. Complaints to the Bar Standards Board

If:

- you are not the barrister's client; or
- your complaint concerns professional conduct rather than service,

You may contact the Bar Standards Board:

Bar Standards Board
Contact and Assessment Team
High Holborn
London WC1V 7JZ
Telephone: 0207 611 1444
Website: www.barstandardsboard.org.uk

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