



Complaints Procedure

1.1. Introduction

- 1.1.1. As a Chambers, we are committed to providing a high quality legal service and to dealing with all of our clients fairly. However, sometimes we may not get it right so if something has gone wrong, including in relation to a bill, we ask that our clients tell us.
- 1.1.2. Section D1.1 (Complaints Rules) of the BSB Handbook Code of Conduct describes how we should handle complaints thereby ensuring that we maintain a high standard of client care as well as meeting regulatory obligations. This Becket Chambers Complaints Policy and Procedure works in conjunction with Section D1.1.
- 1.1.3. Fundamentally, it is vital that we handle complaints promptly, fairly, openly and effectively. Where issues arise, we must learn from them for the benefit of our clients.

2.2. Information to clients

- 2.2.1. We must inform public access clients in writing at the outset of a matter of:
- their right to complain (including about a bill);
 - how complaints can be made;
 - their right to complain to the Legal Ombudsmen, the time frame for doing so and full details of how to contact the Legal Ombudsman; and
 - the circumstances in which they may be liable to pay interest on an unpaid bill
- 2.2.2. Where we are providing public access work using an intermediary then we will inform the intermediary of the information referred to at 2.2.1 as well.
- 2.2.3. If we are doing referral work we must also make the lay client aware that he/she/they may complain directly to us without going through their solicitors.
- 2.2.4. The information referred to in paragraphs 2.2.1, 2.2.2 and 2.2.3 above should be covered within the acceptance of instructions and terms of business.

2.3. Recording complaints

- 2.3.1. Complaints are normally handled by a nominated member of Chambers ("the Nominated Member"). The details of any complaint will be entered into the Complaints Register under a unique complaint number. However, if the Nominated Member perceives any potential conflict interest relating to her/himself in dealing with the complaint s/he will ask a senior member of Chambers to handle the matter.

2.3.2. Throughout the internal review process of the complaint the Nominated Member handling the complaint will also document:

- any investigative steps taken
- minutes of any meetings internally and/or with the complainant
- references to any documents relied on for resolving the complaint (e.g. letters, attendance notes, etc.)

2.3.3. These documents will be kept confidential and will be kept for seven years. They will only be disclosed if required for internal review processes or for compliance with a request from the Bar Standards Board.

2.4. Acknowledging complaints

2.4.1. The Nominated Member will acknowledge complaints in writing to the complainant within five working days, enclosing a copy of this Complaints Policy and Procedure Document.

2.4.2. Our acknowledgement letter will contain:

- a statement of our understanding of the complaint;
- if appropriate, a request for further information that we need in order to consider the complaint and a proposed time frame for providing that information;
- contact details for the Nominated Member; and
- information on when we will next be in contact with the complainant.

2.5. Preliminary assessment

2.5.1. The Nominated Member will consider each complaint objectively.

2.5.2. This stage involves three steps:

- a. Itemising the issues in order to understand the complaint fully;
- b. Considering the complexity and seriousness of the complaint and
- c. Identifying any remedies sought by the complainant and considering the remedies available and/or appropriate.

2.6. Taking action

2.6.1. Any action will depend on the conclusions drawn from the preliminary assessment.

2.6.2. Generally the Nominated Member will:

- investigate the complaint
- obtain feedback from relevant people
- liaise with the Member of Chambers involved
- provide a response to the complainant

2.6.3. The level and extent of the investigations will be proportionate to the seriousness of the complaint.

2.6.4. Both the client and others involved in the complaint will be given the opportunity to provide their account of the situation and respond to points raised.

2.6.5. The Nominated Member will respond to the complainant promptly with any decision or proposed action. We will aim to do this within 10 working days of receiving the full details of the complaint from the client. If there is a delay she/he will write to the complainant to

explain the reasons.

2.6.6. The Nominated Member's response will:

- re-state the details of the complaint;
- outline the investigations undertaken;
- state our findings resulting from the investigations;
- offer a remedy or explain why we do not think it is appropriate to do so;
- explain how to accept the proposed remedy; and
- inform the client of their right to complain to the Legal Ombudsman if they remain unsatisfied, the time frame for doing so and full details of how to contact the Legal Ombudsman.

2.6.7. The complainant's decision will be recorded in the Chambers Complaints Register.

2.7 Confidentiality

2.7.1 As with all client matters we will treat complaints, and any information received during the course of dealing with complaints, with utmost confidentiality.

2.8 Vulnerable clients

2.8.1 Our complaints handling procedure is sensitive to individual differences and needs of our clients.