

Complaints Procedure

Making a complaint

You can register the complaint with the person dealing with your matter or the Client Care Director, Sally Reeve. She is responsible for ensuring that complaints are handled effectively and in accordance with this procedure. This procedure will also apply to prospective clients who we have refused to provide a service to or persistently or unreasonably offered an unwanted service to but only if the complainant has evidence to show that we did not have reasonable grounds to do so.

The Client Care Director keeps a file / register of all complaints. The register/file include all the required details and the register is signed off when the complaint has been finalised. The Client Care Director reviews the complaints data and it also forms part of the Annual Risk Review. The complaints are reviewed to determine if there are any training requirements, changes in systems and processes which are required. This forms part of the Annual Risk Review.

Investigating the complaint

- We will acknowledge the complaint within seven days.
- We will conduct a full investigation and an independent review of the matter.
- We aim to respond in full within 28 days. However, if the complaint is of a more complex nature we will require more time but we will let the complainant know when they will receive a full response.
- We will reply to the complainant, usually in writing to tell him/her of our views on the complaint and how we propose to resolve it, hopefully to the complainant's satisfaction, including appropriate redress, this could include a reduction in fees if appropriate, compensation of a gesture of goodwill. The client will also be advised in what timescale they will be given an initial/substantive response.
- If the complainant is dissatisfied with the outcome, or the way the complaint has been handled, the complainant may write to the Client Care Director who will make such further investigations as are necessary.

The Client Care Director will inform the complainant of the conclusions and any alternative proposals to resolve the complaint, usually within 28 days of this being referred to her.

If still unresolved at this stage, the complainant may take their complaint to the Legal Ombudsman, you will have to bring your complaint to the Legal Ombudsman within 6 months of receiving a final response from us about your complaint and 6 years from the date of the act or omission giving rise to the complaint or

alternatively 3 years from the date you should reasonably have known there are grounds for complaint (if the act/omission took place before 6 October 2010 or was more than 6 years ago).

We will record and report centrally all complaints received from clients.

We will identify the cause of any problems of which the client has complained offering appropriate redress and correcting any unsatisfactory procedures.

Legal Ombudsman

The Legal Ombudsman is an independent body established by the Office for Legal Complaints under the Legal Services Act 2007 to deal with complaints against Solicitors.

The Legal Ombudsman may:

Investigate the quality of professional service supplied by a solicitor to a client.

Investigate allegations that a solicitor has breached rules of professional conduct.

Investigate allegations that a solicitor has unreasonably refused to supply a professional service to a prospective client.

Investigate allegations that a solicitor has persistently or unreasonably offered a professional service that the client does not want.

Before it will consider a complaint the Legal Ombudsman generally requires that the firm's internal Complaints Procedure has been exhausted. If the Legal Ombudsman is satisfied that the firm's proposals for resolving a complaint are reasonable, it may decline to investigate further.

The Legal Ombudsman's address is:

PO Box 6167, Slough. SL1 0EH; telephone, 0300 555 0333; website, www.legalombudsman.org.uk; or email enquiries@legalombudsman.org.uk

The Solicitors Regulation Authority

The Solicitors Regulation Authority can help you if you are concerned about our behaviour. This could be for things like dishonesty, taking or losing your money or treating you unfairly because of your age, a disability or other characteristic.

You can raise your concerns with the Solicitors Regulation Authority.

Data Protection Complaints

If you have any concerns about how we collect, use, store or otherwise process your personal data, you may raise a data protection complaint with us.

Data protection complaints should be directed to Sally Reeve, at sally.reeve@whss.co.uk or by post to 12 Battle High Street, Battle, East Sussex, TN33 0AE.

We will acknowledge your complaint and investigate it in accordance with applicable data protection legislation and our internal procedures. We aim to respond without undue delay and will keep you informed of the progress and outcome of our investigation.

Making a data protection complaint will not affect your right to make a complaint about our legal services under this complaints procedure.

You also have the right to complain to the Information Commissioner's Office ("ICO"), the UK supervisory authority for data protection issues. The ICO may be contacted at:

- Website: <https://ico.org.uk/concerns/>
- Telephone: 0303 123 1113

If you reside or work in another country within the European Economic Area, you may also have the right to complain to the relevant supervisory authority in that jurisdiction