

Chambers Complaints Policy

(Implemented 1 October 2015)

- 1. Pursuant to regulations that govern barristers, we are obligated to draw your attention to Chambers' complaints policy, so that you are fully protected in any dealings that you have with a barrister. This document sets out how you can complain if you are unhappy with any of the services we provide.**
- 2. Our aim is to provide you with a good service at all times. However if you have a complaint you are invited to let us know in writing, or by telephone, as soon as possible. It is not necessary to involve solicitors or others in order to make your complaint but you are free to do so should you wish.**
- 3. Complaints must usually be made within six years of an act or omission that you wish to complain about. Complaints should be made to the Complaints Handler in Chambers in the first instance. An independent Legal Ombudsman also offers a complaints procedure where you are unhappy with Chambers' response. There is also a Mediation option (see below), if you and the barrister agree to such process being adopted.**
- 4. Please note that the independent Legal Ombudsman, the independent complaints body for service complaints about lawyers, has a six year time limit from the date of the act or omission about which you are complaining, within which to make your complaint. The ombudsman can extend the timeframe in certain circumstances. Chambers must therefore have regard to that timeframe when deciding whether they are able to investigate your complaint. In other words, on occasions, Chambers will invite a complainant to write to the Legal Ombudsman if the period in which to complain is passed.**

STAGE ONE: Complaints made in Writing to Chambers

We ask that all complaints are made in writing, supported by documentary evidence. Send your Complaint to:

The Complaints Handler

Barristers Chambers, Summit House

13 High Street, Wanstead, London E11 2AA

Please provide 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.

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. The Complaints Handler may correspond with you to gather certain further information from you. The information that is obtained by the Complaints Handler will be passed in due course to the Complaints Adjudicator.

Our Chambers Complaints Adjudicator is an experienced member of Chambers and a senior member of staff. The Complaints Adjudicator considers any written complaints and on occasions may convene a panel to investigate the complaint.

Within 14 days of your letter being received, the Complaints Adjudicator or his/her deputy in his/her absence will appoint a member of Chambers or themselves to investigate. If your complaint is against the nominated Complaints Handler or Complaints Adjudicator, the next most senior member will investigate the complaint.

In any case, the person appointed will be someone other than the person you are complaining about, who is not involved in the substance of your complaint.

- **The person appointed to adjudicate will write to you as soon as possible to let you know s/he has been appointed and that s/he will reply to your complaint within eight weeks. His/Her reply will set out:**
- **The nature and scope of his/her investigation; •His/her conclusion on each complaint and the basis for his conclusion; and**
- **If s/he finds that you are justified in your complaint, his proposals for resolving the complaint.**

Confidentiality

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, including the Legal Ombudsman or mediator.

Such people will include the barrister member or staff who you have complained about (so that they can provide a response to your complaint), the head or relevant senior member of the panel and the person who investigates the complaint, and any solicitor who may have been involved in the case.

The Bar Standards Board (the regulator of barristers) is also entitled to inspect the documents and seek information about the complaint when discharging its auditing and monitoring functions.

Our Policy

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 minimum period of eight years. Our management committee inspects an anonymised record regularly with a view to improving services.

If you are unhappy with the outcome of our investigation you may either: (a) 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. Or, (b) take your case to a mediator, if the barrister complained of also agrees to such a process.

STAGE TWO: Mediation

If it has not been possible to settle your complaint using our internal complaints process, you can use the alternative complaints bodies (such as ProMediate, or Small Claims Mediation) exist which are competent to deal with complaints about legal services, should both you and the barrister wish to use such a scheme. Please contact our complaints adjudicator for the details of the independent mediation service that Chambers subscribes to.

STAGE THREE: Legal Ombudsman

The Ombudsman is not able to consider your complaint until it has first been investigated by Chambers. If you are unhappy with our adjudication, you must make any complaint to the Legal Ombudsman within six months of our determination (adjudication). **This time limit is strict.**

You can write to the Legal Ombudsman at:

Legal Ombudsman PO Box 15870, Birmingham B30 9EB

Telephone number: 0300 555 0333 Email:

enquiries@legalombudsman.org.uk
